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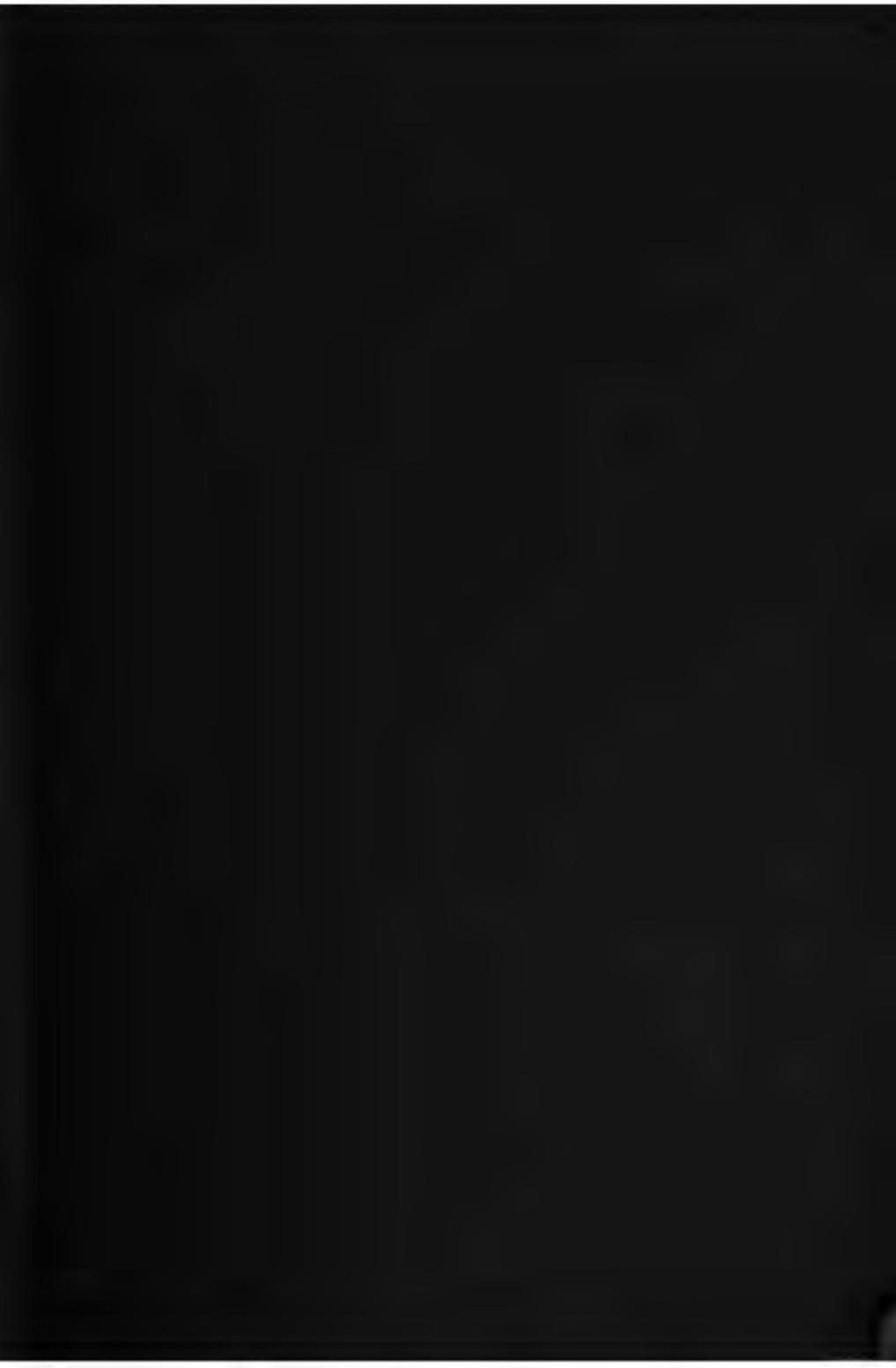


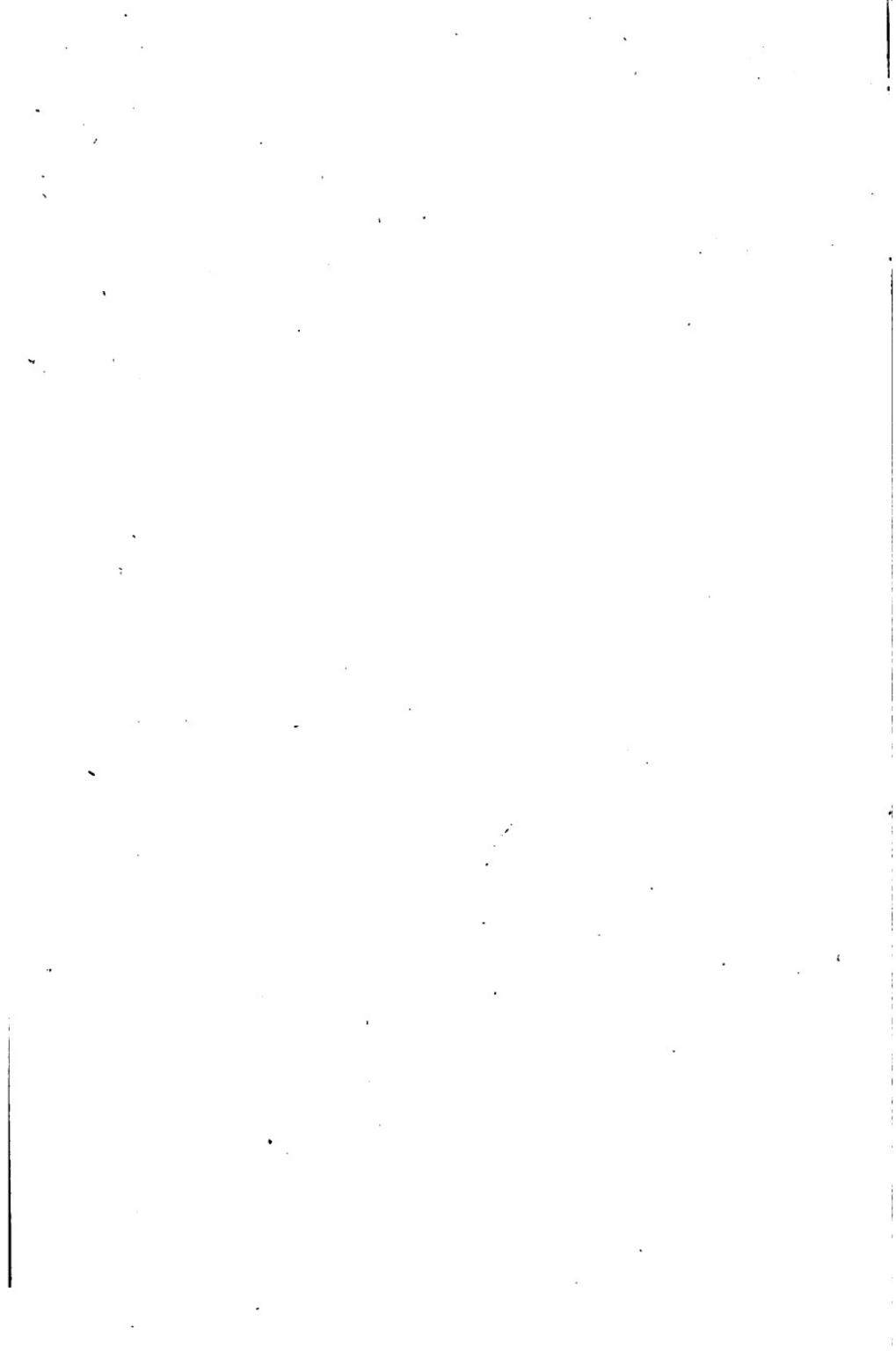
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OR

SIX DAYS AND A SABBATH

BY

ROBERT BUCHANAN

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air. . . .
And there was a great Earthquake."—Rev. xvi. 17, 18.

THE FIRST THREE DAYS

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1885

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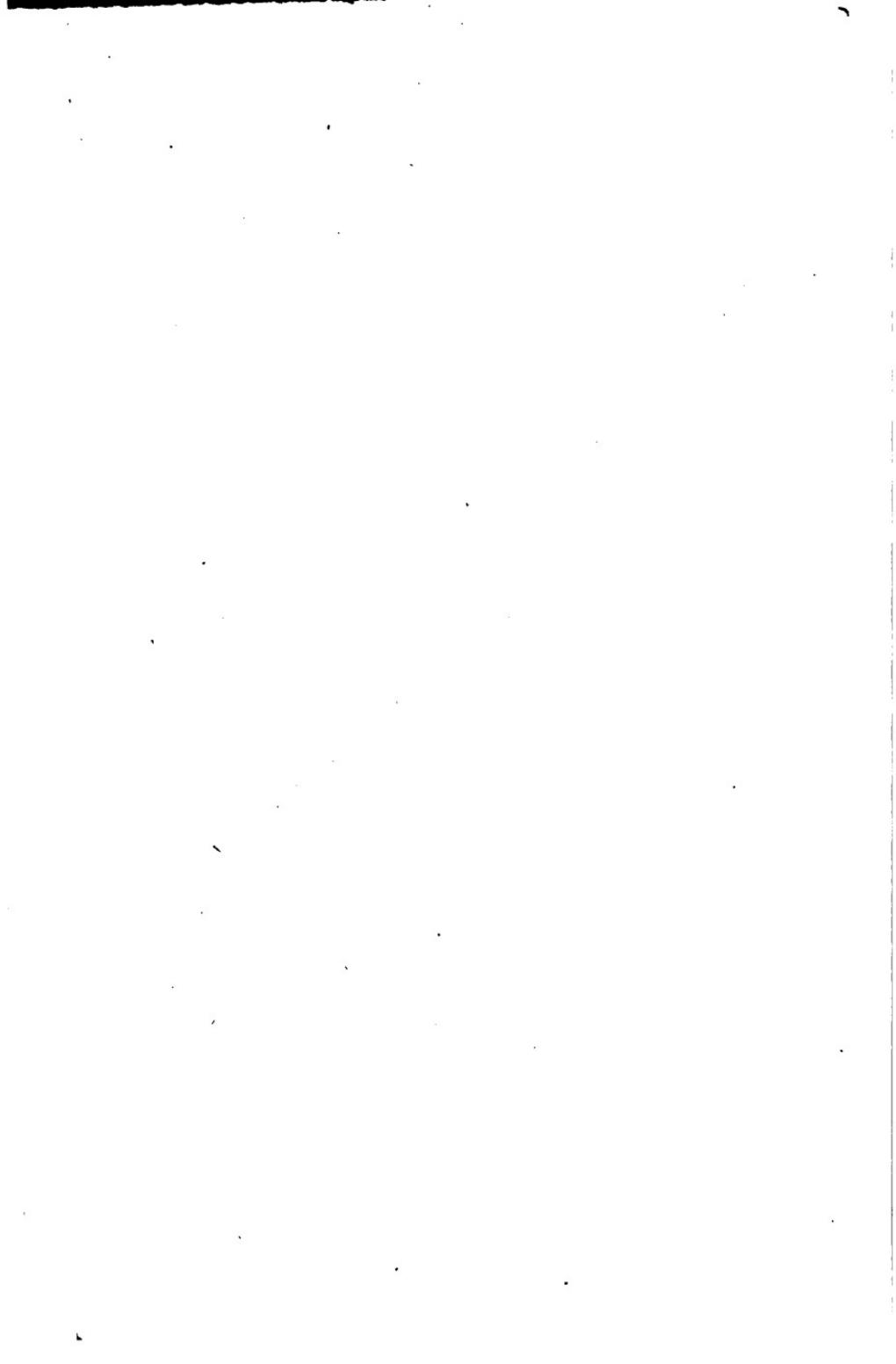
PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following work has been in preparation for years. Curiously enough, since the poem was planned and practically completed, an Earthquake has been actually felt on the south coast of England, and London itself has been slightly threatened.

The present volume, containing the first three days or sections, is practically complete in itself. The second and concluding volume is ready, and will be published after a short interval.

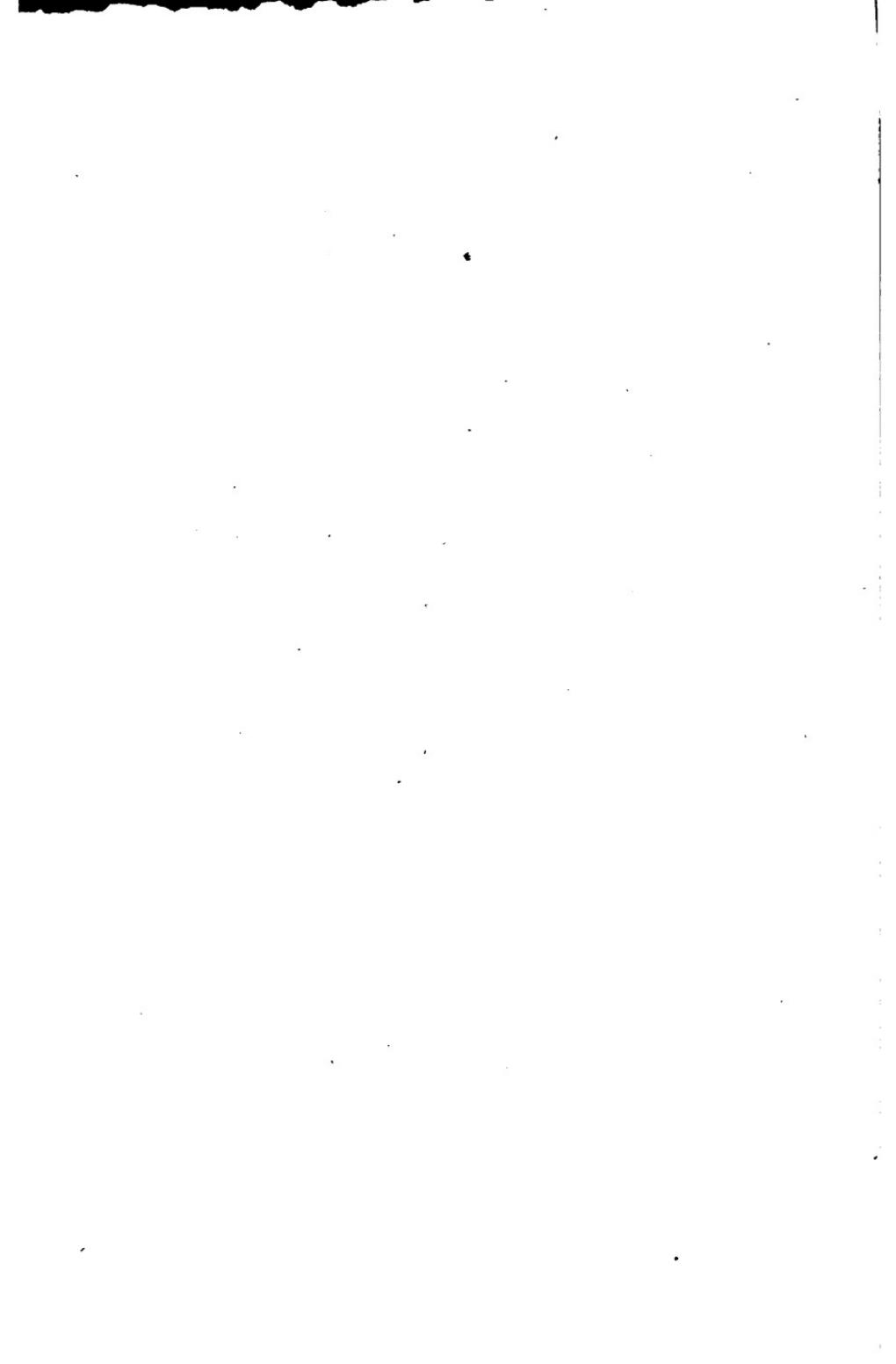
ROBERT BUCHANAN.

LONDON, *November 13, 1885.*



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Dedication.

AD MATREM.

I.

ONE deathless flame, one holy name,
One light that shines where'er I move,
Are thine, out of whose life I came,
Through whom I live and love.

Dearest, I knew thee ere I knew
Myself, and, stirring to thy breath,
From fountains of thy soul I drew
This soul discerning Death.

The light of sun and stars, the clear
Still air of yonder azure space,
The seas and sands of this green sphere,
That is my dwelling-place.

All form, all motion, all delight,
Fused in thy frame flash'd on to mine,
Grew quick, and woke to sense and sight,
And last, to Love divine !

DEDICATION.

A thousand gifts the green earth gives
 Out of the fulness of her breast,
 But she by whom one loves and lives
 Is God's gift, and the best.

Fair type of tenderness and power,
 Of Love whence all things sweetly flow,
 Constant as God through every hour
 Of happiness or woe,—

My Mother, take the book I bring,
 Sure of thy blessing on my brow !
 This life of mine, these songs I sing,
 Are thine,—for they are thou !

Yea, they are thine, as they are his,
 That other part of thee and me,
 Who greeted with a father's kiss
 The child upon thy knee.

He is not lost (or all were lost) ;
 His voice ere long shall call us hence :
 Unchanged he stands, though he has crost
 The borderland of sense.

For God were as a drop of dew,
 If individual love could fall
 Back from the conscious type, whereto
 It floweth, crowning all !

DEDICATION.

3

When yonder sun has ceased to shine,
This earth subsist, those waters roll,
God shall preserve each breathing sign
Of Love's eternal soul !

One deathless flame, one holy name,
One light that shines where'er I move,
Are thine, out of whose life I came,
Through whom I live and love !

II.

Even as I utter'd in such wise
Thy praises, kneeling on my knee,
The Spirit with the pitiless eyes
Came up and gazed on thee !

He lingered long beside thy bed,
But hour by hour his face grew fair :
The greater Spirit overhead
Was list'ning to my prayer !

Ah yes ! He smiled on thee and me,
Our Father who is in the skies :
I felt His mercy—I could see
His strange, still, tearless eyes !

I clasped thee to my aching heart,
I prayed till the dread Shape pass'd on :
God heard my cry—He did not part
The mother and the son !

DEDICATION.

And all my pains and lonely fears
 Trembled to rapturous hope, and lo !
 In passionate prayer that broke to tears
 I watch'd the Shadow go !

III.

I asked for bread—a stone was given ;
 I asked for Fame—men mock'd at me ;
 I asked for Love—my heart was riven
 By man's worst cruelty.

I wander'd haunted and alone,
 I sank in doubts from day to day ;
 The snake Detraction crawl'd upon
 The roof 'neath which I lay.

I rush'd into the world, and smote
 The first proud foe that pass'd along ;
 Then treachery fasten'd on my throat
 And drained my soul of song.

Yet, dearest, thou wast one of three
 Who watch'd beside me, white as snow :
 More rich than any king could be
 Was I, yet did not know !

Fool, to be clamouring for gold,
 When I possess'd a wealth divine !
 Fool, to ask praises from the cold
 World, when the worlds were mine !

DEDICATION.

5

Fool, to go arm'd in hate and fear,
When Heaven itself broke blue above ;
Yea, thrice a fool, too deaf to hear
The still small voice of Love !

Three angels to my hearth were given—
Margaret, Mary, Harriett—
One watching waits in yonder heaven,
But two are with me yet.

Margaret with the mother's eyes,
The sad grey hair, the holy mien,
Walks by my side, while Mary lies
Under the kirkyard green.

[For darkness wrapt me like a cloud,
While the pale spirit men name Death
Came, with white lilies and a shroud,
And hush'd an angel's breath.]

And she, Love's youngest child divine,
Cloth'd on with radiance heavenly sweet,
Places her little hand in mine
And guides my faltering feet !

The earthly tumult fades away,
The waters sigh, the stars keep chime,
Rose-red the great celestial Day
Walks the waste waves of Time.

DEDICATION.

And so one thing at least is sure—
Love, and the fountain whence it flows !
God keep me passionately pure
To drink its deep repose !

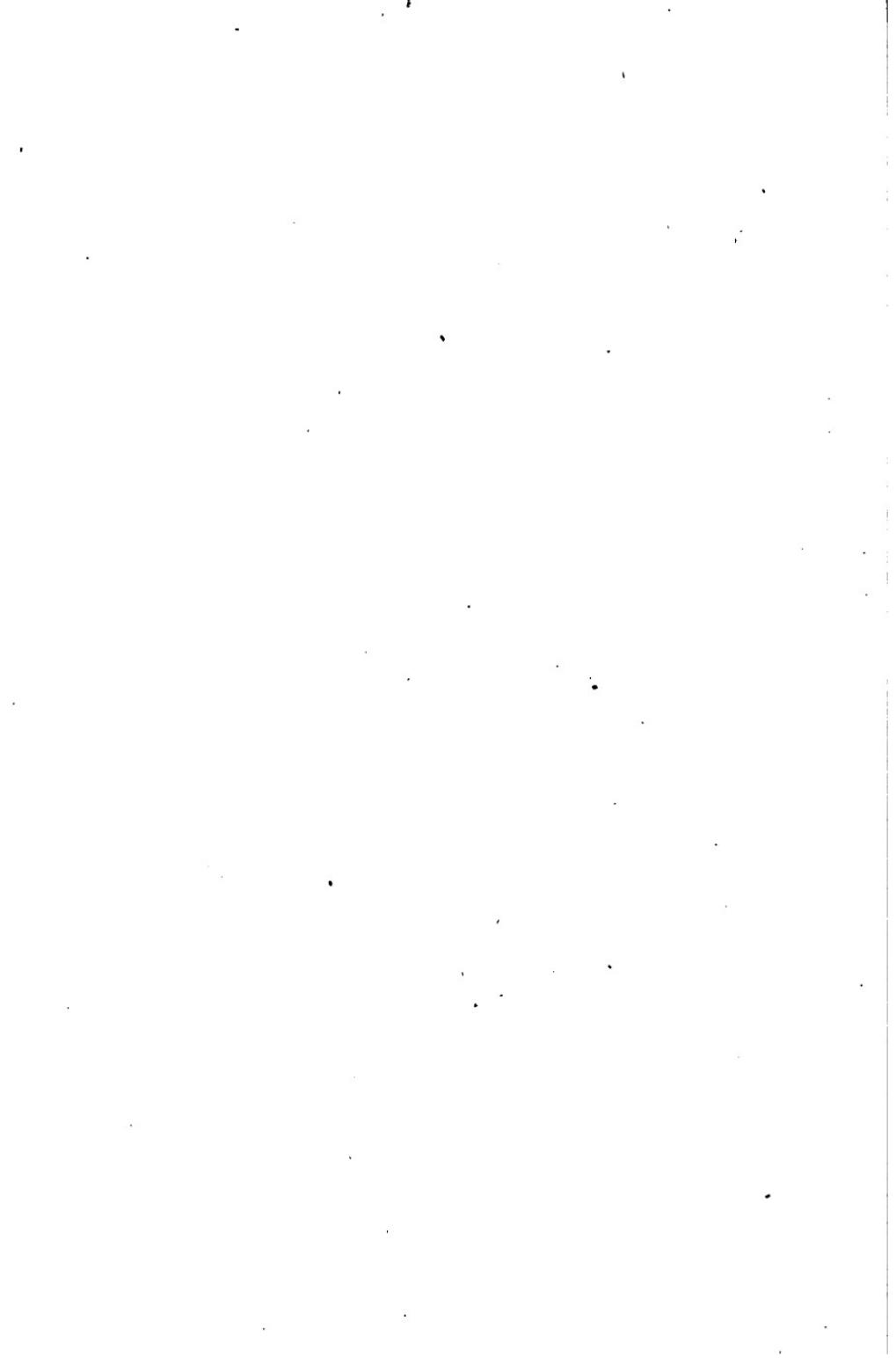
Bring me no laurel wreaths to deck
My brow, no gold in large increase ;
Twine loving arms around my neck,
And chain my soul to peace !

R. B.

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA, ESSEX,
May 1885.

Prelude.

THE EXODUS OF LADY BARBARA.



PRELUDE.

THAT summer when the shocks of Earthquake came
Under the very streets of the Great City,
The Lady Barbara was the first to fly ;
Yet flew not far, but pausing with her train
At Ferndale Priory, on the banks of Tweed,
Sat in the sun and held her frighten'd court.

Now thus the thing befell. The first shock came
At midnight, when the City partly slept,
But here and there, where lights of feast were lit
And men and women circled in the dance,
A murmur like the very voice of God,
A rocking like the rocking of the Deep,
Came, and the revellers looked at one another
In terror dumb as death ; a moment's space,

And all again was still, and haggard men
Question'd if it had only been a dream.
Next day the public journals blazed abroad
The nameless terror ; how at dead of night
A deep vibration like a thunder-crash,
Faint yet distinct, brief yet electrical,
Had run through London ; how some fiery force,
Volcanic, geocentric, such as that
Which in the former time laid Lisbon low,
Had stirred the roots of that vast tree of life,
The mighty City ; how the troubled Thames
Had risen like a serpent in the night,
And, shuddering, overflown its slimy banks ;
How the dark streets were shaken, rocked, and riven,
Above the sudden and mysterious swell
Of some dark subterranean sea of fire.

With hand half-palsied from a nameless fear,
The newsman nigh forgot his flowers of speech,
Telling of columns tottering to the fall,

THE EXODUS OF LADY BARBARA.

11

Of shattered dwellings and of broken panes,
Of sleepers wakening in the dead of night,
Their white beds surging like the waves o' the sea !

At Limehouse, on the troubled river-side,
A factory had fallen ; farther east,
A narrow street had open'd to its sewers,
Just wide enough to show the seams of stone,
While the black dwellings upon either side,
With fissured walls and crackling window-panes,
Rock'd back from their foundations, but as yet
Stood firm and fell not ; on the western side
Of great St. Paul's, by folk descried at dawn,
A running crack like fork'd lightning ran—
Strange as the fabled writing on the wall,
And, like that writing, ominous of doom.
Yet, for the rest, the City stood unscathed.
The Earthquake, like a monster lioness
Watching its victim, some poor helpless lamb,
Having first stretched one cruel fatal claw

PRELUDE.

To strike it into terror, crouch'd unseen,
While through the affrighted victim's feeble frame
Trembled mesmeric thrills of nameless fear
And dangerous expectation. All next day
The trouble and the hum of terror grew,
And when again the clouds of darkness fell,
Men feared to creep into their beds and sleep,
Lest the dark Deep should open under them !
So many sat in vigil, listening
All through the solemn watches of the night,
Which nevertheless passed by in starry peace ;
And when the next night, and the next again,
Went by in silence, London breath'd once more,
The sounds of life once more grew jubilant,
And from their watch-towers and observatories
The hierarchy of Science reassured
The trembling townsfolk, bade them cast off fear,
Because the threat of doom had passed away.

But on the fourth night, when the streets were still,

Another throb from earth's fierce heart of fire
Ran through the City with a thunder-shock,
Though feebler than the first : once more the Thames
Rose loudly sobbing and o'er-swept its bed ;
Once more the streets and walls chattered like teeth ;
Once more men wakened shuddering out of sleep
With that dread sough of warning in their ears !

Then preachers prophesied the end of all,
Doom, and the opening of the seventh great seal ;
While in the lonely streets and crowded lanes
The haggard folk clustered as thick as ants
Which feel the anthill crumbling underneath
Uprooted by the mole ; the palaces
Were empty of their regal butterflies ;
The parks and public squares were desolate,
The theatres abandoned to the dust,
And all glad sounds of merriment and feast
Hushed in the princely dwellings of the proud.

PRELUDE.

But in the city still, and in the marts
The lamps of commerce flickered timorously ;
A few pale men still walked about on 'Change,
And in the darkened vaults of dusty banks
Gaunt slaves still guarded gold.

Then first of those
Who fled before the dark Cimmerian threat
Was that young wife whose delicate nether limbs
Were brawly buskin'd with celestial blue—
The Lady Barbara of Kensington.

Who doth not know our Barbara the learned,
Flower of Midlothian and the agnostic queen,
Who, full of culture to the finger tips,
A Scots earl's daughter, born 'neath Arthur's Seat,
Young, bonnie, winsome, and a poetess,
Married the little Yankee millionaire,
And flitted from the North to Babylon ?
Her London mansion was the home of Art,
In style antique, with Argus on the walls
And "Salve" on the threshold of the door ;

Her guests the very learned of the land
And every guest a lion great or small.
All through the season to her afternoons
The favourites of Fashion and the Muse,—
The last great traveller in gorilla-land,
The newest painter or musician,
The poet latest found and most divine,—
Flock'd, sure of worship and a cup of tea ;
But chiefly (for our Barbara, understand,
Was nothing if not philosophical !)
The modern savant and the scientist,
The students of the heavens and the earth,
Professors of all 'ologies and 'isms,
Found there a welcome ; there, in tongues diverse
As those that puzzled Babel long ago,
They wrangled o'er the nebular theory,
The spectrum of the tail of the new comet
Just seen in Capricornus, Bastian's scheme
Of life's beginning. Nor the occult alone,
But every male or female wanderer

PRELUDE.

Out of the beaten highway of the creeds
Was gathered into Barbara's peaceful fold :
The castaway who had in soul's despair,
His cassock lost, his prayer-book left i' the hold,
Plunged overboard from that old ship the Church,
Now tossing water-logg'd amidst the storm ;
The Arian and the Unitarian,
The lady Medium, the Spiritualist,
The *Aesthetic*, who, proclaiming Art for Art,
Carving his God on his own handiwork,
Proves totem-worship not an empty dream.

But when the murmur of the Earthquake came,
The teacup trembled in the scoffer's hand,
The wise looked foolish, and the lions ran
Lowing together like affrighted storks.
In that dread moment, he who faced the Sphynx
And read annihilation in its eyes,
Who, from the cynosure of mastery,
Survey'd the conflict and the wreck of worlds,

Saw suns grow dark like torches suddenly
Plunged hissing into water, and foretold,
With scientific equanimity,
The sure extinction of the human race,
Became as terror-stricken as a bairn
Who, waking suddenly at dead of night
To find the night-light out, begins to wail.
Then many named God's Judgment with a sigh
Who thitherto had named it with a smile !

But ever fleet in feminine resolve,
And now made fleeter by a fluttering fear,
Our Barbara did not pause to think or pray,
But, followed by her folk and husband, fled
Back to her native Scotland, where she dwelt
In safety at the Priory, gathering
Faint rumours from the City far away.
Thence, when her fears had time for breathing space,
And when no message of destruction came,
She issued to her chosen votaries

PRELUDE.

Sweet-scented missives in her own fair hand,
Bidding them, while the terror held the City,
To attend her Court of Learning, bright and glad
As any mediæval Court of Love,
In that fair dwelling on the banks of Tweed.

In flocks they came, the apostles of the creeds,
Poets and painters and philosophers,
Teachers and preachers, lions, lionesses,
Long-haired æsthetes, long-winded scientists ;
And since the Priory could not lodge them all,
The inns and cottages around about
Were full of spectacled and bearded men,
Whose strange ways made the country people gape
In wonder and in awe ; but every day
They gathered at the Priory, droning there
Like bees about their queen.

'Twas summer time.

The hills and vales had put their glory on,
And wandering in Barbara's Paradise,

You would have thought the world as sweet and safe
As on Creation's day. Fronting the south,
Upon the shoulder of a woody brae,
The broad and comely modern mansion stood,
And pausing on its air-hung terraces
You saw beneath you on the river-side
The roofless ruin whence it took its name.
All round stretched park and pale, with colonnades
Where the horse-chestnut spread its seven-leaved fan
And broke to amber foam of waxen blooms
O'er deep green dells where dappled fallow deer
Like restless shadows among shadows moved ;
With ponds of silver, where with dripping urn
The marble Naiad o'er her image hung,
Girt with the water-lily's oiled leaves ;
With sweeps of fronded fern and flowery knolls
As full of twinkling ears and watchful eyes—
Coney and squirrel, doe and leveret—
As any happy dell in Fairyland !
Beyond the woodland, sloping to the banks,

Were sharen lawns with flower-edged paths between.
In midst of these, upon the river-side,
Clearly reflected in the running river,
The Priory ruins, roofless, windowless,
And thickly carpeted with emerald grass.

Here, where the uncut hair o' the grass grows deep,
The summer light falls solemn and subdued,
While entering the mouldering roofless walls,
Pencilled with golden moss and lichens grey
Where'er the night-black ivy doth not crawl,
You see the jackdaws in a cawing crowd,
Like spirits of the long-departed monks,
Rise from the topmost ruins clamorously
And flit against the azure patch of sky.
The world, the thought of man, dissolves away,
And with a sea of stillness overhead
You walk in awe, even like a charmèd man
Pacing the voiceless bottom of the Deep.

Crossing the ivy-hung refectory
You glide beneath a broad low porch of stone,
And in a moment, ere you know it, pass
From shadow into sunlight,—for you stand
Upon a terrace set with flowery urns
Descending to the very water's brim.
Upon that terrace, in the summer sheen,
There stands the figure of a naked Faun,
Goat-eared, goat-footed, playing on his pipes
And smiling like the very Pan himself.
Straightway upon the ears (or so it seems)
There comes the summer sound of singing birds,
Of fountains falling, runlets murmuring,
Leaves rustling, wood and valley echoing
In joy primeval to that sylvan sound ;
And glancing back upon the Priory walls,
O'er which the jackdaws hover in a crowd,
You half expect to see the monks appear,
Hornèd like satyrs, shouting, streaming forth
To foot it to the merry pipes of Pan.

Upon this terrace sat, one summer day,
Our hostess, smiling 'neath her parasol
On troops of motley guests ; close to her side
Three Graces, cousins, born in Annandale,
With country cheeks of strawberry and cream ;
A little in the background, grimly pleased,
Cigar in mouth, straw hat upon his head,
Midas, her husband. Scattered here and there,
Grouped on the flowery lawns and garden seats,
In summer costumes brighter than the flowers,
Or learnèd suits of philosophic black,
The fugitives from threaten'd Babylon ;
While in and out the Priory's ruin'd walls,
Like glad bees swarming in and out the hive,
Throng'd others, garrulous as the busy daws
Gossiping in the ivy overhead.
Some on the shining river rowed and sang,
Fluttering in shallop round the granite stairs ;
Some promenaded, deep in learn'd talk ;
While liveried lacqueys and trim serving lasses

Moved here and there with baskets of ripe fruit,
Clusters of grapes, and draughts of mountain dew.
'Twas like a golden glimpse of Arcady
Painted by Watteau for a happy court,
With nymphs and satyrs neatly modernised,
Shepherds and shepherdesses gaily dight
As shapes of Dresden china, bright and clean.
The Priory in the background, dark and grey
Against a sky of clear and burning gold,
And in the foreground such a sylvan view
Of winding water, fields of growing grain,
Clusters of woodland, knolls and bosky bowers,
Melting away to dim blue heathery hills,
As made the place seem Arcady indeed !
Golden the prospect, earth and azure heaven
Mingling their happy lights like Life and Love,
And eyes that on the winding river gazed
Could scarce discern within those crystal depths
Water from heaven, heaven from the heavenly
stream.

PRELUDE.

“ What news from London ? ” Lady Barbara cried
To one, a little dapper scientist,
Fresh from the train, who trotted to her seat
Shaking her small gloved hand ; and with a smile
The new-comer replied, “ The City stands !
And though the streets and marts are empty still
Of all save those who are over poor to fly,
Many believe the peril passed away.
This morning’s journals say a shock was felt
On Thursday at Madrid ; if so, the fires
Whose fierce pulsations took us unaware,
Are running southward, back to warmer zones,
Their tropic birthplace, near the heart of Earth.”

“ Pray God it be so,” answer’d Barbara ;
Then turning ’neath her sunshade, she resumed
Her converse with the group surrounding her :
“ Dear friends, you are right ! —what scene, howe’er so
bonnie,
What country merriment, howe’er so merry,

Can compensate us children of the age
For London in the season ? I confess,
Though Scottish born and Edinboro' bred,
From boot to bonnet I'm a Londoner !
And even here with chosen friends around
I miss the mighty flow, the changeful sound,
Of yon vast ocean of Humanity.

The canker-worm of Ennui gnaws the heart
Of Pleasure's full-blown rose ! Come, who'll devise
Some sport to fleet away the golden time ?
Who'll lead our drowsy-headed idleness
In flowery fetters of some pleasant toil,
Until the Earthquake-Monster is appeased,
And gladly once again we enter in
Fashion's celestial gate ? ”

Smiling she paused,
And for a space none answer'd ; but the air
Was filled with summer music, and we heard,
Above the humming of the honey-bees
That flitted in and out the flowery knolls,

The black rooks sleepily cawing, and the dove
Cooing clear answer from the Priory woods ;
On a wild apple-tree that clung and bloomed
High on the ruin'd walls, the blue-wing'd jay
Flash'd screaming, and along the river-side
The kingfisher, an azure ray, flew past.
Thus all things were alive with peaceful joy :
The dædal Earth, bright faced and golden hair'd,
With ample heaving bosom, sighed for bliss,
Through half-closed eyelids blinking up at heaven !

Then one said, “ As near Florence long ago
Gallants and gentle dames that fled the Plague
Sat 'neath green boughs and passed the golden time
In dainty tale-telling, that grew divine
On eloquent Boccaccio's honeyed tongue,
So let us here, to fleet the summer hours,
Tell tales of Mirth and Love and Love's disdain !
Be thou our Queen of Love, let these thy maids
Twine a green garland for the brows of him
Whose tale beguiles the fever'd fancy best ! ”

“ Alas ! ” said Barbara, sighing wearily,
“ The world is old and grey before its time ;
And that blind god, who used to run before
Its happy feet, and wave the golden torch,
Beckoning with smiles, now sits as Darwin’s ape
Upon its shoulder, whispering ‘ Vanity ! ’
Ours is no Court of Love for amorous dames
And bonnie cavaliers ; hush’d is Love’s lyre,
Its poet dead, his cold hand on its strings ;
And all remaining now for man to seek
Is the great Problem neither bard nor seer
Has help’d as yet to solve ! ”

Then with a smile

Cold as the scalpel, Douglas Sutherland,
Critic and comic vivisectionist,
Young cynic of the *Cynical Review*,
Scot from the mountains, but a renegade
Forswearing homely porridge and the trews,
Who, drifting round the compass of the creeds,
Had found no foothold for his slippery feet,

Cried, "The great Problem ever sought by fools,
Forgetting that whoever fronts the Sphinx,
And meets her stony glare, must rave till doom!"

Here the plump pantheist, Spinoza Smith,
With luminous eye and hanging underlip,
Loose gait, lax logic, interposed and said,
"Better to rave like the old oracle
Than, quivering like a restless tadpole, haunt
The muddy shallows of perpetual doubt!"
Turning to Barbara, "Since we moderns seek
A summer pastime like those Florentines,
Why not let that same Problem be our theme,
And let each man and woman tell in turn
Some chronicle of those who, quick or dead,
Have wander'd problem-haunted through the world?"

"Agreed!" cried Barbara; then, brightly turning
Her face upon the groups surrounding her,
"A golden thought, to employ our idleness
With tales of meaning and of mystery—

Not old wives' rhymes to frighten foolish bairns,
But stories wise that sad Philosophy,
The way-worn wandering Jew, still toiling on
With staff and wallet, croaks at every door !
How say you ? Shall our new Decameron
Take as its theme no little pasteboard god,
Pink Cupid or bright-eyed Saint Valentine,
But God Himself, the riddle of the worlds ? ”

Smiling she paused. We looked at one another,
And even then we seemed to hear afar
The murmur of that subterranean voice
Which thundered from the fiery heart of Earth,
Threatening the mighty City in its pride.
“ Agreed ! agreed ! ” we clamoured, echoing her ;
“ Begin the sport, and be yourself our Queen ! ”

“ Then thus,” said Barbara, “ we form our court :
Be you our maids of honour ”—here she smiled
On the three cousins born in Annandale—
“ You gentlemen our faithful cavaliers

And braw-drest pages, headed if you please
By Verity as learned Chamberlain.
Be thou," she added (turning next to me),
" Our poet lyrical and laureate,
Breaking our measured prose at intervals
To music ; and do thou, Sir Whimsical
(Nodding her head at Douglas as she spoke),
Assume the hood and baldric of the Fool,
Here at our elbow set, with privilege
To make a passing jest from time to time
Of better wiser folk ! "

Here Douglas seized
A stalk of foxglove drooping purple bells,
And shook it, zany-fashion, in the air,
Crying " By Touchstone and by Rigoletto,
I accept the scoffer's office cheerfully,
And on my badge, expect much merriment
When wise men choose so lunatic a theme ! "
" To-morrow," laughing added Barbara,
coronation revels shall begin ;

And after that, each summer afternoon,
We shall conjure you, on your fealty,
To gather here, and rax your wits to speed
The solemn pastime. Till yon smiling sun
Again is near his setting, we dismiss
Our court, and leave our leal and loving friends
Free to devise what other sports they please—
To-morrow we shall mount our throne and reign ! ”

And with that tryst to meet upon the morrow
We scattered, some to dream about the park,
Some to explore the neighbouring rocks and woods,
Some to the dusky Priory libraries,
To fleet the moments till the dinner-bell
Should bring the pasturing human flocks together.
But I, who knew by heart the winding Tweed,
Wander'd away along the river-side
Glad-hearted and alone, and drank for hours
Full sweetness and full summer, pondering
The green world's problem with a poet's heart.
'Twas the glad flower-time—over orchard walls,

Mossy and golden, softly blushed the pear,
Though apple-blooms were falling ; scented May
Ran quick along the hedgerows, white and red ;
And lilac, scented like a maiden's breath,
Flower'd in sun-shaded gardens, maiden-like ;
And lush laburnum shook its locks of gold
O'er bonnie banks of green and golden broom ;
The white pea lit its delicate lamps afield,
And in the lanes speedwell and campion
Cluster'd round snow-white stars of Bethlehem.
The bee, with dusty gold upon his thigh,
Humm'd busily to himself ; the butterfly,
A wingèd flower, blew lightly hither and thither ;
The woods, the fields, the lanes, were all alive
With quick-eyed sylvan creatures, numerous
As motes i' the sunshine. Cheerily sung the lark,
Answer'd from hawthorn branches by the merle,
Gold-bill'd and silver-throated. By the river
The heron stood as motionless as stone
Over his dim blue double, then arose

With soft dark flap of wing, to light again
Among the speckled shallows lower down.
Lingering silent on the banks, I saw
The muddy cabin of the water-rat,
And in the calm beheld the brown rogue swim,
Bearing a green leaf for his little house;
His whisker'd nose above the surface peeping,
A long bright ripple sparkling in his track.

Musing I wandered, till, beyond the braes,
The sun sank crimson among purple isles
And reefs of black, and from the paling west
The round thin filmy moon floated like silk,
Then 'gainst the green transparent topmost leaves
O' the woodland flutter'd, brightening. Then, the glades
Dark'ning, the dusky mavis and the merle,
Pour'd their precipitate rapture 'mong the boughs,
And nestling lovers listen'd as they sang :

Lover! lover!

Kiss sweet! kiss sweet! sweet!

Woo her now! woo her now!

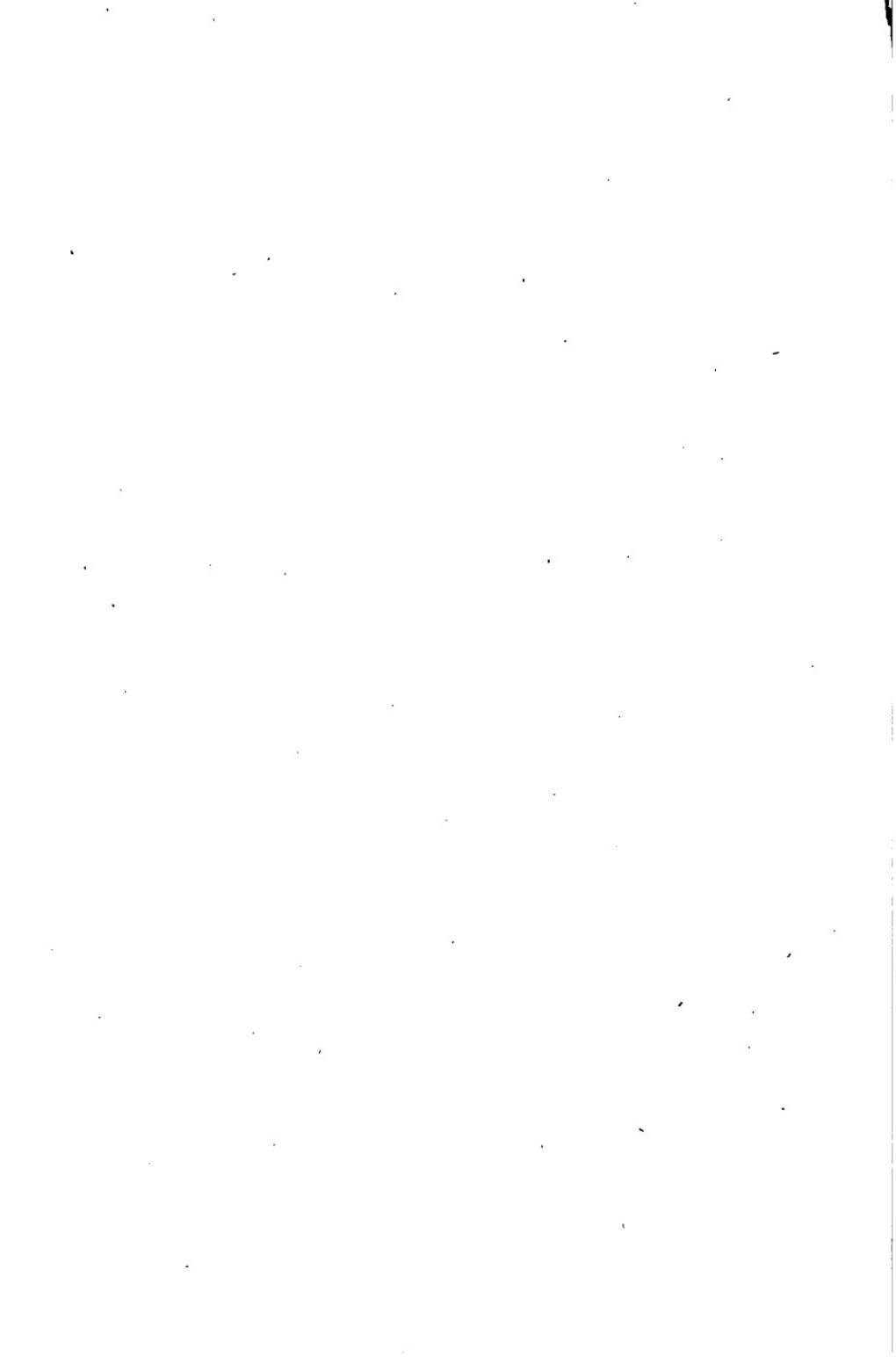
The glassy river sparkled smooth as jet,
Just touch'd with crystal beams.

Soft as a leaf

The gloaming fell, and flutter'd like a veil
Over the half-closed eyelids of the world.
Stars glimmer'd faintly, opening one by one
And blossoming above me, while I stole
Through warmly scented shadows till I gained
Dark fern-clad slopes that ran to hills of heather,
And looking heavenward saw a painter's vision.
There like a naked maiden stood the Moon,
Wading in saffron shallows of the west :
Timidly, with a tender backward glance,
She reach'd a faltering foot to feel the way,
Then, brightly smiling, as the lucent waves
Wash'd, tipt with splendour, round her swan-white throat,
Bent forward, cleft the dusk with ivory hands,
And swam in splendour thro' the seas of night.

The First Day.

(RENAISSANCE.)



THE FIRST DAY.

THE morrow came ; and, when the sun was high,
Beneath a silken awning rosy-hued
Sat Barbara, smiling on her happy court ;
The Graces near her, Midas at her side,
And all the Sciences and all the Arts,
In decent black or motley summer suits,
Gathered around her : modern Muses too,
From Sappho Syntax in her spectacles
To Jennie Homespun, Clapham's idyllist,
Called "Wordsworth's daughter" by the small reviews.
Nor lacked we grace of stately company
From lands beyond the thunders of the *Chimes*
Which turn the small beer of the Senate sour :
Dan Paumanok, the Yankee pantheist,
Hot gospeller of Nature and the flesh,
Who, holding soul but body purified,

Vaunted the perfect body fifty years,
Then sank beneath a sunstroke paralyzed,
A wreck in all save that serener soul
Outlooking from his grave and patient eyes.
There sat he, in his chair, a craggy form,
Snow-bearded, patriarchal, wearing well
His crown of kindly sorrow. Close to him,
Miranda Jones, the lyric poetess,
Lean and æsthetic to the finger-tips,
Crouched like a pythoness with lissome limbs,
Pale eyes that swam with sybilline desire,
And vagrant locks of amber.

To this last

Queen Barbara turn'd, and smiling royally cried :
“ Barbara to Miranda ! Take the harp,
And sound the prelude that befits our theme.”
Whereon the other, starting from a trance,
Answered, “ You spoke ? My soul was far away !

ching that old Faun whose stony eyes
n a hundred summers come and go,

Methought he changed, and on his naked back
Had drawn a cassock, on his head a cowl,
And so, transformed into a very monk,
Moaned answer to his comrades, turn'd to daws
There in the Priory, cawing high in the air
Their *pax vobiscum!*"

With a laugh then cried

Douglas the scoffer, puffing his cigar—
"The dream was apt, Miranda! Strip the monk
In new tunes as in old, you find beneath
The satyr's skin; beneath the black rogue's cowl,
The satyr's swinish leer." But scornfully
Tossing her python ringlets, she replied—
"The monks were men, and in their holy hearts,
And in their weary eyes, though filled with dust,
The elemental pagan lingered still.

I read a tale once in a dusty book
Bought at a bookstall in a dusty street
At Florence—how, long centuries ago,
When all the world was gray because of Christ,

A sudden glory of the buried world
Flashed from the tomb, as Cytherea rose
From darkness of the weary and rainy sea ;
And how a monk (no satyr, but a soul
Pure as this sapphire on my finger, sir !),
Having with eyes of wonder seen the sight,
Died of its rapture. Have you heard the tale ?
I put it into rhymes which Sweetsong praised
One week I was his guest at Sunbury.”

“Give us the tale !” we cried, and at a nod
From Barbara, our queen and arbitress,
Miranda shook her locks and thus began :—

Julia Cytherea:

A LEGEND OF THE RENAISSANCE.

I.

With shadow black upon the convent wall
In fierce white light the musing Monk doth crawl ;
 He sees the lizards pass
 Beneath him on the grass ;—
Silent as they, he stirs, and that is all.

With blood that slippeth slow as hour-glass sand,
He weeds the garden with his lean long hand,
 The sun beats down on him,
 But, sunless and most dim,
His sad eyes downward look upon the land.

THE FIRST DAY.

Yet once or twice he riseth up his height,
Gaunt as a tree he loometh in the light,
And gazeth far away
Where, through the trembling day,
Rome sits and gleams, insufferably bright.

His hand he presses on his breast and sighs,
Towers, churches, temples, wearily he spies ;
His black eyes blink i' the ray,
His bloodless cheek keeps grey ;
He stoops again, and weeds, with weary eyes.

To him there leapeth one with eager bound,
Crying, " Ho, Marcus, leave thy garden ground—
Gird up thy loins and come
Down to the streets of Rome—
Behold the miracle which men have found !

" "Tis Venus' self,—with lips still poppy-red,
Light on her cheeks, bright gold upon her head,

Divine, yet cold in death,
Still living without breath,
As white and chill as is her marble bed ;

“ By some dark chemic trick of fingers old
Embalm’d within that ivory coffin cold,
A thousand years i’ the tomb
Her cheek hath kept its bloom,
Her eyes their glory, and her hair its gold.

“ Come down and look upon her in her rest,
Her white hands crost upon her whiter breast ;
One fold of fleecy dress
Covers her nakedness ;
Her face doth smile, as though her dreams are blest.”

The pale monk Marcus scarcely heeds or hears—
He stands and through the sunlight sadly peers—
“ Thou ravest, get thee gone ! ”
He murmureth anon—
Thin sounds his voice, yea, faint as falling tears.

THE FIRST DAY.

That other crieth, "Doubt me not, but go !
Venus awakes ; Rome's buried blossoms blow ;
Not Christ in His winding-sheet
Was half so pure and sweet—
Run to the Capitol, and thou shalt know !"

He cries, and soon around him others come,
All panting, pointing to the far-off dome,—
Till, drawn from his cold height
To look upon the sight,
The pale monk Marcus creepeth down to Rome.

II.

Now mark what old traditions tell
Of how this miracle befell. . . .

Nigh fifteen centuries had shed
Their snows upon the sad Earth's head,
Since on the heights of perfect peace
Where banqueted the gods of Greece,

One starry midnight there did rise
That pallid Shape with human eyes,
Who, clad in grave-clothes and thorn-crown'd,
Stood silently and gazed around
From face to face,—and as on each
He looked in sorrow with no speech,
Each face grew wan and chill as clay,
And faded wearily away !

Ay, one by one those forms had fled,
Till all the heavenly host were dead,
Cast down and conquer'd, overthrown
Like broken shapes of marble stone.

Pallas, with pansies in her hair,
Like to a statue wondrous fair
Stricken and fall'n ;—Selene white,
Cold, sleeping in the starry light ;
Great Zeus, Apollo, and sad Pan,
With all his flocks Arcadian,
Strewn down like dead leaves on the tomb
Of Him who slew them in their bloom.

THE FIRST DAY.

All dead ! the brightest and the best !
And Cytherea with the rest !

And now He too, who cast in thrall
All shapes within that banquet-hall,
Who came to slay and overcome
The shining gods of Greece and Rome,
Had crept again to find repose
In the dark grave from which He rose ;
And there for fifteen centuries
Had lain unseen with closed eyes,
Had slept, and had not stirr'd a limb,
Though men grew mad for lack of Him.
“ Awake, O Christ ! ” they cried in pain,
“ For lo ! no other gods remain ;
And Thou hast promised to return
With robes that flame and eyes that burn,
‘ Midst thunder-flash and trumpet-peal,
Legions of angels at Thy heel,
To take Thy throne, and overwhelm

Thine enemies, and rule Thy realm !”
In vain ! Within His clay-cold prison
Silent He slept, and had not risen—
Though all the other gods were fled,
Though no god ruled the quick or dead,
Though all the eyes of Earth were wet,
He slept,—and had not risen yet.

Meantime, to keep his name in Rome,
The Eighth Pope Innocent had come
Instead of Christ, and from Christ’s seat
Thrown down his bastards to the street—
So wither’d up with sin and death,
The dark world drew laborious breath
Beneath his footstool ;—and no fair
Dead god would waken to its prayer !

It happen’d at this very time,
When in the sinful Church’s slime
Grew monsters of malignant birth,
To eat man’s substance on the earth,

And sit, where gods had sat, in Rome
(Where Christ would sit if He should come),
In this dark moment of eclipse,
When prayer was silent on the lips
And faith was dead within the thought,
The mystic miracle was wrought.
For Lombard workmen, on a day,
Digging beneath the Appian way,
Sifting the ruins of Rome dead,
Untomb'd, in wonder and in dread,
A marble coffin strangely scroll'd,
Enwrought with ivory and with gold.
Stain'd was it with great earthen stains,
Worn with the washing of the rains,
And splash'd with blots of blood-red clay,
But seal'd as a shrine it lay ;
And when they raised it to the light,
After a thousand years of night,
Their eyes read its inscription thus :
“Julia, the child of Claudius !”

The Church authorities were brought—
Great cardinals in raiment wrought
With gold and red, and trains resplendent
Of mighty priests and monks attendant ;
And while these cross themselves and strew
The coffin cold with holy dew,
They force the lid, and lo ! they find—
Not dust to scatter on the wind,
Not bleaching bones, not blacken'd clay
Horrible in the light of day,
Nought o'er whose sweetness Death hath power,
Not dark corruption,—but a Flower !

Flower of the flesh, as soft and new
As when she drank the sun and dew,
Golden her hair with light from heaven,
As if she slept but yester-even ;
Her lips, that softly lay apart,
Still red as any beating heart ;
Her form, still fairy-like and bright,

THE FIRST DAY.

Though marble-cold and lily-white,—
Her hands, unwither'd, softly prest
Upon her still unstainèd breast,—
A Maiden Flower she slumber'd there,
After a thousand years still fair,
Within her white sarcophagus.

“Julia, the child of Claudius !”

Out of the coffin cold as ice
Rich fumes of cinnabar and spice
Still floated ; as she lay within
Flower-sweet she scented, and her skin
Shone as anointed. One soft fold
Of precious woof around her roll'd
Half veil'd, with its transparent dress,
Her lithe and luminous loveliness ;
Upon her wrists bracelets of gold
Were fastened ; on one finger cold
Glimmer'd an onyx ring. So sweet,

She lay, embalm'd from head to feet,
Kept (by some secret long forgot)
Without a stain, without a spot,
As when, a thousand years before,
In days of god and emperor,
She closed her eyes and slumber'd thus.

“Julia, the child of Claudius !”

When thus she turn'd with soft last breath
Into the chilly arms of Death,
She might have seen the happy light
Some sixteen years,—but form so bright
Ne'er trembled between childish glee
And tremulous virginity.
Only a child ; yet far too fair
For any child of mortal air,
Since Passion's fiery flame, it seem'd,
Still play'd about her locks, and stream'd
From 'neath her eyelids ; and her limbs

THE FIRST DAY.

Were amber with such light as swims
Round Love's own altar ; and her lips,
Untouch'd by darkness or eclipse,
Were wonderful and poppy-red
With kisses of a time long dead,—
When Love indeed in naked guise
Still walk'd the world with awful eyes
And flaming hair. So fair she lay,
Burning like amber in the ray,
As burns a lamp with sweet oils fed
Within some shrine no foot may tread,
No hand of any mortal mar ;
And as men gaze on some new star,
Men marvell'd while they gazed on her.

Soundly she slept, and did not stir :
And far away beyond the sea
The white Christ slept as sound as she !

III.

They bore her to the Capitol,
And left her lying, where the whole
Of Rome might look upon her face.

And lo ! her beauty fill'd the place
Like very sunlight, and her lips
Seem'd redder, and her finger-tips
Pink-tinted, and the scent that came
Out of her mouth seem'd fraught with flame
Of a live burning heart ; and lo !
Her gold-hair caught a deeper glow,
Making an aureole of light
Around her forehead waxen white ;
And those who gazed upon her thus,
Within her white sarcophagus,
Were awed, and felt their hearts grow faint
Like folk that look on some dead saint.
“ No saint is she,” the pale priests said,

“ But of an evil beauty dead
The ghost accurst. Behold again
The pagan world that Christ hath slain,
Kept by the charm of God, to show
The fate of fairest flesh below ! ”
And as they murmur’d thus anew
They sprinkled her with holy dew,
And while they sprinkled her some thought
The sleeper smiled !

And thus through Rome,
And o’er the land, and past the foam,
The rumour of her glory flies ;
And flocking underneath the skies
From dawn to sunset, great crowds press
To look upon her loveliness.
Prelates and kings and courtiers throng
With priests and nobles ; old and young ;
Matron and maid and girl o’ the street,
And wicked women scented sweet ;
Soldier and beggar, monk and clown ;

Nuns from the cloisters, peasants brown
From the far hills—

Last, to the place
There cometh, deathly pale of face,
His heart scarce fluttering in his breast,
The tall monk Marcus with the rest.

IV.

He came, he gazed upon her there,
Her closed eyes, her clinging hair,
Her marble cheek just flush'd with red ;
And first he shrank away in dread
Like one who fears to break with sound
The charm which wraps some sleeper round ;
Then, in the fumes of spice and myrrh
That floated round and over her,
Kindling a sense that sweeten'd Death,
He seem'd to drink her very breath,—
And creeping closer—like a snake

That croucheth low in a green brake,
Watching a lambkin starry white
Which lieth still and slumbereth light—
He watch'd in fascination deep
The crystal mirror of her sleep ;
And though they thrust him oft aside,
Crept back to mark her, vacant-eyed
Like one that dreams.

Wolf-like and gaunt,
Full of some secret woe and want
Only that loveliness could still,
Lost to all other wish and will,
He paused, while others went and came ;
And when his comrades named his name
He only turn'd a silent face
Upon them for a moment's space,
And smiled, then dumbly gazed once more.

Ever across the marble floor,
With murmurs deep and whispers low,

The wondering folk did come and go—
But never voice or footfall loud,
Nor all the trouble of the crowd,
Awoke that sleeper from her rest ;
And when upon her marble breast
And o'er her brow and on her lips
The sunlight's trembling finger-tips
Were laid blood-red, she slumber'd on !

And when the wondering crowds were gone,
And silent night fell down on Rome,
And 'neath the Capitolian dome
The shadows blacken'd, still she lay
Beauteous as she had been by day ;—
For round her limbs and o'er her hair
Trembled a light serenely fair,
And all the darkness of the place
Felt the soft starlight of her face ;—
Upon her, from the dome o'erhead,
Great shadowy shapes of spirits dread

Gazed darkly down, and all around
The shadows brooded with no sound ;—
Without, beyond the doorway, fell
The arm'd heel of the sentinel,
Who paced in vigil to and fro
Under the mighty portico.

Then, when the Capitol was dark,
And not a living eye might mark,
When the great City slumber'd deep
Wrapt in its azure robe of sleep,
Out of some shadowy hiding-spot,—
Wherein, unseen, suspected not,
He had linger'd darkly on till then,—
Crept, like a wild beast from its den,
Marcus the Monk ! Silent, alone,
With naked feet on the cold stone,
He rose and feebly felt his way
To the cold coffin where she lay ;
And looking down as in a dream

He caught the dim and doubtful gleam
Of the cold face he could not see.
Then kneeling low on bended knee
He clutch'd with fingers clammy cold
The coffin wrought about with gold,
And drank with lips as cold as ice
The scents of cinnabar and spice
That hover'd o'er the form divine
Sleeping therein as in a shrine.
Then, lo ! beyond the painted pane,
The Moon rose, wan and on the wane,
And gentle amber light was shed
Upon the live form and the dead ;
And Marcus rose his height and stood,
While from his head the monkish hood
Fell darkly back, and on his brow
Starlight like hoar-frost trembled now,
And in his eyes there gleam'd again
Hope like despair, rapture like pain.
Thus, with his thin hand on his heart,

His sad lips softly held apart,
He gazed in fascination deep
Upon that passion-flower of Sleep !
More beautiful, more strangely sweet,
Than in the daylight's golden heat,
More softly still, more dimly bright,
Clothed in the mystery of the night,
With small hands folded on her breast,
She slumbers on in balmy rest.
And now the yellow moonlight lies
Upon her lips and closèd eyes,
Gleams on her hair of braided gold,
Fades on her forehead marble-cold,
And o'er her as she lies in death
Trembles and broods like frozen breath !
Still mystical and strange to sight,
Though marble-cold and lily white,
A maiden-flower she slumbers there,
After a thousand years still fair,
Within her white sarcophagus !

Then, haggard, wild-eyed, tremulous,
Clasping her coffin gold-enwrought,
Marcus the Monk gazed down and caught
From the still splendour of her look
Strange madness, and his sick soul shook
With dark despairs. Then made he moan :—
“ Flower fair as thou no man hath known
Since Christ came down—but in thy stead,
And in the place of sweet gods dead,
The harlot and the concubine
Sit haggard, sharing bread and wine
At Christ’s own board, and mocking man
Within the very Vatican !
And Christ is dead and will not rise,
Though, spat on by the cruel skies,
A thousand mortals spirit-sore
Creep to His dark tomb and implore ;—
Yea, the stark Skeleton therein,
With shrouded limbs and bandaged chin,
Lies still and hears not, crumbling down

THE FIRST DAY.

Beside its crimson thorny crown.
Decay is there, and deep decay
Within a million tombs of clay,
And dark decay of craft and creed
Within a million hearts that bleed ;
Yet here, though all fair things have died,
Serene and fair *thou* dost abide,
Preserved to show to our dim sight
What shapes of wonder and of light
The gods *our* God hath stricken low
Fashioned a thousand years ago.
O fair white lily, softly pearl'd
With dim dews of a happy world
Long lost, long miss'd—awake, awake !
And save the world for Beauty's sake
Instead of Christ's !”

God, is he dreaming ?

Is this thing sooth, or only seeming ?
Why doth he tremble to his knees

In awe of some new sight he sees? . . .
The moon-rays turn to shapes of gold
Clinging around that coffin cold,—
The stars of night look in, and shine
With rapture tremulous and divine,—
The figures on the dome above
Glimmer, look down, and seem to move,—
And lo! the Sleeper's shining hair
Grows yet more luminously fair,
And light like life's pulsation swims
Faint blood-red through her lissome limbs.
Behold! she reddens like a rose,
Her bosom heaves, her eyes unclose,
And (as a maiden from her sleep
Stirs with a sigh serene and deep,
Half conscious of some broken dream,
Half dazzled by the morning beam)
She draws one long and balmy breath,
And turns upon her bed of death!

v.

Her bed of death ? She is not dead !
Her breath is warm, her lips are red,
Her hands are fluttering, softly prest
Against the warmth of her bright breast ;
One knee is raised, and from its white
The fleecy lawn falls soft and light ;
And, turning her bright head, she sees
The pale Monk moaning on his knees !
Then, as a little maid may see,
When awakening very peacefully,
Some one she loveth waiting near,
And gaze upon him with no fear,—
She looks upon his wondering face,
Smiles gently for a moment's space,
Then reaches out her hand !

“ Christ God !
Master and Maker, 'neath whose rod
This man hath bent so many years,

In famine, fever, torture, tears,—
Thou God by whom the gods of old
Are smitten low and coffin'd cold—
Strengthen Thy slave, if such he be,
Lest this thing slay him utterly !”
He takes her hand, he clasps it to him,
Rapture, like life-blood, kindles through him !
He kisseth it, he feels it warm,
He strains it to his famish'd form,
And crieth on—“ Awake ! arise !
Love on thy lips, light in thine eyes—
Arise ! the wide world waits to be
Thy servant and to worship thee !
Awake ! and let the gods that were,
Who shaped thee thus divinely fair,
And kept thee by some chemic charm
Imperishably bright and warm,
Awaken too, and take the crown
Of Him whose red Cross struck thee down.

He died, and will not wake, but *thou*
Didst only rest and sleep till now !
And they who framed thee thus divine,
And seal'd thee in thy solemn shrine,
Perchance are only slumbering too ! ”

She stirs,—with brightening eyes of blue—
She rises from her pillow cold,
And rippleth down her locks of gold ;
She shakes away the shroud of lawn
Around her soft sides lightly drawn ;
She stretches out her arms snow-white,
She riseth up in the dim light,
She stands erect and smiling sweet,
With glistening limbs and rosy feet,
Upon the marble floor that gleams
Like water in the trembling beams !
Hast thou beheld in some green path
A nymph of stone, fresh from the bath,

One snowy foot within a pool
That spreads beneath her rippling cool,
The other softly raised, the while
She draweth on with sleepy smile
Her garment,—and in act to dress
Frozen to everlastingness,
Full of some maiden thought doth look
In silent vision on the brook,
While her dark shadow under her
Stirs softly, though *she* doth not stir ?
Even so that sleeper, when she rose
From that divinely deep repose,
Paused wondering at herself, and felt
The light flow round her limbs, and melt
On the white moonlit floor whereon
She stood erect, as still as stone.

Then unto Marcus it did seem
That all things trembled into dream !

Clinging around that maiden frame
The moonlight kindled into flame,
And all the place grew burning gold
With beams more bright a thousandfold
Than beams of day ; the coffin bright
Was heap'd with roses red and white,
And all the floor seem'd blossom-strewn
Crimson and white beneath the moon !
With heaving breasts and soft footfall,
Amid that glory mystical,
The Maiden moved, her eyes of fire
Answering his look of dumb desire.
Then lo ! the very Capitol
Grew shrunken like a burning scroll,
And vanish'd ;—the great City fled ;—
The glory deepen'd overhead ;—
Instead of stone beneath their feet
Were grass and blossoms scented sweet,
A blue sea wrinkling far away
Crept foam-fringed round a purple bay,

And through a green and flowery land,
Under the cloudless sapphire skies,
Those twain were walking hand in hand,
Looking into each other's eyes !

VI.

In that green land of light and love
It seem'd enough to live and move—
To wander hand in hand and see
The dewy light on flower and tree,
The sparkling of the brooks and streams,
The hills asleep in sunny beams ;
And then to glide on unafraid
Through warm deep groves of summer shade,
Where the hot sunlight's golden blaze
Fell tangled into emerald rays. . . .
O hark ! 'mid dingles green and deep
The dove's cry, like a sound in sleep,
At intervals is faintly heard !
On her thin eggs the mother-bird

THE FIRST DAY.

Sits brooding, while her mate is seen
Flitting across the tree-tops green !

What shout is that, what sylvan cry ?
What shapes are those that flash and fly ?
Wood-nymphs and satyrs whirling round,
Naked and merry, and vine-crown'd ;
Then with deep laugh and faint halloo
Far down the glade they fade from view. . . .
What faces bright are those that gaze
Out yonder from the leafy haze,
And smile, and vanish into air ?

Silent she stands, supremely fair,
Whiter than ivory, on a lawn
Flower-strewn and bright and deep-withdrawn
In the green bosom of the woods ;
And while from the green solitudes
Come drowsy murmurs, sylvan cries,
He gazes gently in her eyes.

Beneath their feet a fountain's pool
Spreads o'er the grass and ripples cool,
And from the diamond depths below
A Naiad's face as white as snow
Looks up, 'neath glimmering hands that braid
Her dripping locks in the green shade.

And now again the prospects gleam
Into the glory of a dream ;
And lo ! they stand 'mid sand and shells,
And watch the waves with sleepy swells
Rising and breaking drowsily
In a blue crescent of the sea.
Beyond them pastoral hills are seen
Mist-capt, but robed in purple sheen ;
And 'midst the clouds above them pass,
As in some old magician's glass,
Shapes of Immortals that pursue
Their path across the dreamful blue.

THE FIRST DAY.

On the white sands they sit and rest,
His head is pillow'd on her breast ;
He feels her heart's warm go-and-come,
He sees the blue sea fringed with foam ;
He marks the white clouds sailing slowly
Across the heavens serene and holy ;
Then closes eyes—thrusts one warm hand
For coolness deep in the soft sand—
And with the other holdeth hers.
So still he sits and never stirs,
But feels his life and being blent
With all he loves, and is content.

Is it still dream ? for now they pass
Along a pathway of deep grass,
And find where Venus sets her shrine
Amidst a flowery wood of pine :
And side by side they enter there,
And kneel with folded hands at prayer
A little space—and when 'tis done
Glide forth again into the sun.

VII.

What form is this in white arrayed
Far down the woodland colonnade,
Approaching slow with a black wand
Cross-shapen in her lily hand ?
Is't Cytherea ?—is it she
Who rules the green earth and the sea,
Who moves abroad with fearless tread
Her hand upon a lion's head,
Wherever men or beasts are wild,
And tames their hearts and makes them mild ?

Slowly she comes,—a shape of grace,
Leading a lion,—and her face
Is white and cold and thin as death ;
And as she cometh near her breath
Is very faint and feebly drawn,
And heavy on the shaven lawn
Her footstep falls, and in her eyes
Dwell deathly pain and sad surmise.

THE FIRST DAY.

Why seem all things so sudden chill ?
Why grows the light on wood and hill
Frosty and faint ? Why shrinks the sun
So coldly as she cometh on ?

“ Marcus ! ”—she cries,—and lo ! he stands,
With pallid face and outstretch’d hands,
Gazing in awe—and from his lips
One wondering word in answer slips—
“ Madonna ! ”

Yea, in sooth ‘tis she,
Mother of Him who died on Tree,
The Virgin from whose milky breast
He drank who set the world at rest !
Ah me ! how pallid and how thin,
With clammy grave-cloth ‘neath her chin,
And dust upon her golden hair,
She stands and looks upon him there !
Shuddering he moans, with low bent brow,
“ Mother of God, what seekest thou ? ”

“ What dost thou here ? ” the faint voice cries,
While underneath the darkening skies
All groweth dim. “ Frail-hearted one,
Why hast thou ceased to serve my Son ?
And who is this who now doth stand
Naked beside thee, with her hand
Thrust into thine, and hangs the head,
But shows her hot neck blushing red ?
Let go her hand whoe'er she be—
And, for thy soul's sake, follow me ! ”

But Marcus cried, “ My Master lies,
Silent, with dust upon His eyes—
He sleeps and He will ne'er awake.
But lo ! from cloud, from brook, from brake,
From every nook of earth and main,
The old gods gather once again.
Go back into thy grave once more—
Sleep with thy Son, thy reign is o'er—

Leave the green world to her and me,
Nor mar our loves' eternity ! ”

Paler the weary Mother grew,
And with her sunken eyes of blue
Gazed piteously a little space
Into his passion-fever'd face—
Then pointing with thin hand, she cried
To that fair semblance at his side—
“ Follow me, *thou* ! my grave is deep—
There by my pillow thou shalt sleep ;
There shall we wait with darken'd eyes,
In peace, until my Son shall rise ! ”

But Marcus clutch'd her with a cry,
And all things darken'd 'neath the sky,
And tall and terrible and white
The Virgin loom'd before his sight,
And with a finger cold as ice
Touch'd on the shining forehead thrice
That gentle vision ; and behold !
She shiver'd as with deathly cold,

And lay a corpse of marble, prest
In madness to his burning breast.

Then Marcus wail'd, "Lost ! lost !" and lo !
The cruel heavens began to snow,
And all was dark, and a shrill gale
Of wintry wind began to wail ;
But clasping her with piteous cries,
He kiss'd her on the mouth and eyes,
And kissing cried, "Awake ! awake !"
Till his heart broke for sorrow's sake ;
And heavy as a stone he fell.

VIII.

At dawn (as old traditions tell),
When the pale priests and soldiers came
To see once more that shining frame
Within her marble tomb, behold !
Still beautiful, with locks of gold,

Unfaded to the finger-tips,
With faint pink cheeks and rose-red lips,
Her they found softly sleeping on ;
And by her, turn'd to senseless stone,
Watching her face with eyes of lead,
Knelt the monk Marcus, cold and dead.

He ceased, to a chorus from the Priory walls
Of daws thick-throated. Straightway Douglas cried,
“It is the caws, my soul, it is the caws !
Hark how the dusky rascals echo her !
They vaunt the merriment of cakes and ale,
And other succulent sweets they loved when monks,
Above all kneeling and praying in the dark
That make the stony heart and horny knee !”
But no one laughed, for on our souls the tale
Fell with a touch of sweet solemnity ;
And we were silent, till a quiet voice,
Low like a woman’s, murmured : “Oftentimes
I have dreamed a dream like that (if dream it were),
And seen, instead of Cytherea’s eyes,
The orbs of Dian, passionately pure,
Witching the world to worship !”

He who spoke—

A man with heavily hanging under lip,

Man's brow above a maiden's moist blue eyes—
Was Verity, the gentle priest of Art,
A vestal spirit, not too masculine
To avoid those seizures epileptiform
Which virgins have when yielding oracles.
He, by the affinity of sex which draws
The ivy to the oak-tree, long had loved
Not wisely but too well, though reverently,
The Scottish prophet, Thomas Ercildoune,
Who, thundering for the nations seventy years,
Found in the end that he had merely soured
The small beer and the milk of his own dwelling.
He, Verity, though all his soul was love,
Had from his master learned the scolding trick,
And so was somewhat shrewish out o' doors.
. Inside the temple where he ministered
His soul was solemnised to perfect speech,
And many a storm-toss'd wanderer, listening to
him,
Had worshipt and been saved.

" How sweet it were,"

He added, " in this godless age of Fact,
When hideous monsters of machinery
Are fashioned unto largess-giving gods,
To uprear on some green mountain-side a shrine
To Artemis, the goddess of the pure !
For if, as Heine held, the gentler gods
Whom Christ drove forth from heaven with whip of cords
Survive, but banish'd into lonely lands
Do gloomy task work for their bitter bread,
Somewhere on this sad earth the heaven-eyed Maid
Wears homespun, turns the wheel, and is a slave.
Upbuild her temple, make it beautiful
With shapes of marble wonderfully wrought,
Strew it with flowers of antique witchery,
And on the altar let the lunar beam
Sleep like the white and sacrificial Lamb ;
And thither on some peaceful summer night
Perchance the weary one will come, and shed
Peace on the eyelids of her worshippers ! "

We listen'd wondering, some with pitying smiles,
And others credulous of the fantasy.

I answered, "Who shall find her? We, who dwell
In cities vast and foul as Babylon,
Have seen, or seemed to see, the baser gods,
Her sisters and her brethren, busy yet
As spirits of the orgy and the dance.

Smooth Hermes, full of craft as when he filch'd
Apollo's horses, wears a modern coat,
And helps the citizen to cheat on 'Change;
And Jupiter, though feeble and rheumatic,
Leading his moulting eagle on the chain,
Still creeps about the distant villages
And prompts the silly preacher as he throws
His Calvinistic lightnings at the boors;
And who that ever walk'd down Regent Street
At midnight, or some garish summer day
At Paris saw the Grand Prix lost and won,
Has failed to note the pink divinity,
In rags or silk and sealskin, still the same

As when she tript Adonis long ago !
But for the other, Dian, Artemis,
Athenian or Ephesian, who shall say
The pure thing lives, where nought that lives is pure ?
The sunshine knows her not, and the sweet moon,
Which used to shine upon her ivory limbs
Bright and pellucid in her dusky bath,
Now lights the pale street-walker at her trade,
And there's an end."

Buller from Brazenose,
Another priest of Art, who holds that Art
Is lost if clothed or draped, and in whose eyes
The very fig-leaf is a priest's device
To mar the fair and archetypal Eve,
Broke in with mincing speech and courteous sneer—
"I have heard that when that good man George the
Third
Reign'd o'er his farm, this England, Artemis
Was noticed raining happy influences
Over the national pig-sty ! Later still,

Arm'd with the British matron's household broom,
She drove our Byron out and bang'd the door.
Since then, thank God!—or say, since Wordsworth died
[Poor man, he came to physic a sick world
That wanted wine, and gave it curds and whey!]—
Your goddess has been seldom heard or seen.
Doubtless she drudges in some parson's house
As far as Lapland, where the temperature
Is like her bosom, virginal and cold.
We want her not in England! Heaven forbid!
We need the sun of love to warm our blood,
Apollo's blaze and Cytherea's breath
To thaw our lives and prove us men indeed!"

While thus he spake, I noticed in our midst
A pale young man who had come into the world
White-hair'd, and so looked old before his time;
His eye was burning, and his delicate hand
Was thrust into his bosom, touching there
Some secret treasure. Listening he stood,

Eager to speak, yet dumb through diffidence.
To him the pythoness Miranda Jones
Exclaimed, "What secret are you hiding there,
Close to your heart, or shirt-front, Cousin Fred ?
I'll swear—a poem !" Turning with a laugh
To Barbara, she added, " Speak to him !
My cousin Frederick is a poet too,
And fain I know would win a poet's praise
From this fair company and you, its Queen."

Then blushing like a girl, and glancing up
To encounter Barbara's smile of kind command,
The young man answered, " Nay, indeed 'tis naught—
The merest trifle—not a tale at all ;
Yet strangely enough, it touches rhyme by rhyme
Upon the very quest of which they speak ;—
I too," he added, blushing still more deep,
" Have chased that same Diana, in a song ! "

" Then prithee read it," cried Queen Barbara,
And other voices clamour'd echoing her ;

And drawing a paper from his breast, the youth
Glanced timidly around the company,
And then with eye that kindled like a coal
Blown with the breath, he eagerly began.

PAN AT HAMPTON COURT.

*"O who will worship the great god Pan
Out in the woods with me,
Now the chestnut spreadeth its seven-leaved fan
Over the hive of the bee ?
Now the cushat cries, and the fallow deer
Creep on the woodland way,
O who will hearken, and try to hear
The voice of the god to-day ?"*

One May morning as I woke
Thus the sweet Muse smiling spoke,
Resting pure and radiant-eyed
On the pillow at my side,—
Sweetest Muse that ever drew
Light from sunlight, earth, and dew,

Sweeter Muse and more divine
Than the faded spinsters Nine !
Up I sprang and cried aloud,
“ May-day morn, and not a cloud !
Out beyond the City dark
Spring awakes in Bushey Park ;
There the royal chestnuts break
Into golden foam and make
Waxlike flowers like honeycomb,
Whither humming wild bees roam ;
While upon the lakes, whereon
Tritons blow through trumps of stone,
The great water-lily weaves
Milk-white cups and oiled leaves.
Phillis dear, at last 'tis May !
Take my hand and come away ! ”

Out of town by train we went,
Poor but merrily content,

Phillis in her new spring dress,
Dainty bonnet lily-white,
Warm with youth and loveliness,
Full of love and love's delight ;
I, the lonely outcast man,
Happy and Bohemian,
Loving all and hating none
Of my brethren 'neath the sun.
Soon, a dozen miles away,
From the train we lightly leapt,
Saw the gardens glancing gay
Where the royal fountains leapt,
Heard the muffled voices cry
In the deep green Maze hard by,
Heard the happy fiddler's din
From the gardens of the inn ;
Saw the 'prentice lads and lasses,
Pale with dreary days of town,
Shuffling feet and jingling glasses ;

THE FIRST DAY

While, like flies around molasses,
Gipsies gathered dusky brown !
O the merry, merry May !
O the happy golden day !
Pan was there, and Faunus too,
All the romping sylvan crew,
Nature's Mœnads flocking mad
From the City dark and sad,
Finding once again the free
Sunshine and its jollity !
Phillis smiled and leapt for joy,
I was gamesome as a boy ;
Gaily twang'd the fiddle-string,
Men and maids played kiss-in-ring,
Fountains leapt against the sun,
Roses bloom'd and children played,
All the world was full of fun,
Lovers cuddled in the shade !
What though God was proved to be
Paradox and fantasy ?

What though Christ had ceased to stir
From his lonely sepulchre ?
“ If the Trinity be dead,
Pagan gods are still alive !
Fast they come to-day,” I said,
“ Thick as bees from out a hive !
Pan is here, with all his train
Flocking out of street and lane ;
Flora in a cotton gown
Ties her garter stooping down ;
Town bred Sylvan plump and fat
Weareth lilac in his hat ;
Faun and satyr laughing pass,
Hither and thither Venus roams,
Gay Bacchantes on the grass
Laughingly adjust their combs !—
Phillis, all the world is gay
In the merry, merry May !”

“ O who will worship the great god Pan
At Hampton Court with me ? ”

THE FIRST DAY.

*She cried, and unto the Maze we ran
Laughing so merrily.
“The sun is bright, and the music plays,
And all is May,” sang she :
And I caught my love in the heart of the Maze
With kisses three times three.*

Down the chestnut colonnades
Full of freckled light and shades,
Soon we saw the dappled deer,
Pricking hairy tail and ear,
Stand like Fauns with still brown eyes
Looking on us as we came.
Faint behind us grew the cries,
Merry music and acclaim,
Till we found beneath a tree
All the peace of Arcady.
Lying there, where green boughs spread
Curtains soft against the sky,
While the stock-dove far o'erhead
Pass'd with solitary cry,

Now and then we look'd around
Listening, till distinct and clear
Came the cuckoo's call profound
From some happy Dreamland near !
Happy as a heart of gold
Shook the sunshine everywhere,
Throbbing pulses manifold
Through the warmly panting air ;
On the leaves and o'er the grass
Living things were thronging bright,
'Neath a sky as clear as glass
Flashing rays of life and light.
All things gladden'd 'neath the blue,
While we kiss'd and gladden'd too.
" Praised be golden Pan," I said,
" All the duller gods are dead ;
But the wood-god wakes to-day
In the merry, merry May !"

" *O who will worship the great god Pan ?*"
I cried as I clasped you, dear ;

THE FIRST DAY.

*"Form of a faun and soul of a man,"
He plays for the world to hear ;
Sweetly he pipeth beneath the skies,
For a brave old god is he !"
O I kissed my love on the lips and eyes !
And O my love kissed me !*

Slowly, softly, westward flew
Day on wings of gold and blue ;
As she faded out of sight
Dark and balmy fell the night.
Silent 'neath the azure cope,
Earth, a naked Ethiope,
Reach'd black arms up through the air,
Dragging down the branches bright
Of the flowering heavens, where
Starry fruitage glimmer'd white !
As he drew them gently near,
Dewdrops dim and crystal clear
Rain'd upon his face and eyes !

Listening, watching, we could hear
His deep breathing 'neath the skies ;—
Suddenly, far down the glade,
Startled from some place of shade,
Like an antelope the dim
Moon upsprang, and looked at him !
Panting, trembling, in the dark,
Paused to listen and to mark,
Then with shimmer dimly fair
On from shade to shade did spring,
Gain'd the fields of heaven, and there
Wander'd, calmly pasturing !

*“ O who will worship the great god Pan
Out in the woods with me ?
Maker and lover of woman and man,
Under the stars sings he ;
And Dian the huntress with all her train
Awakes to the wood-notes wild ! ”*

*O I kissed my love on the lips again,
And Dian looked down and smiled.*

THE FIRST DAY.

Hand in hand without a care
Following the Huntress fair,
Wheresoe'er we went we found
Silver footprints on the ground :
Grass and flowers kept the shine
Of the naked feet divine.

Now and then our eyes could see,
As we softly crept along

Through the dusky greenery,
Glimmers of the vestal throng—
Locks of gold and limbs of snow
Fading on as we came near,
Faint soft cries and laughter low
Ceasing as we paused to hear !

O the night more sweet than day !

O the merry, merry May !

O the rapture dark and deep

Of the woodlands hush'd to sleep !

O the old sweet human tune

Pan is piping to the moon !

“ Though the systems wax and wane,
Thou and I,” he sings, “ remain—
Both by night and one by day
Witch a world the old warm way !
Foot it, foot it ! Where you tread
Woods are greenly carpeted.
Foot it round me as I sing
Nymphs and satyrs in a ring !

“ *Gnarled and old sits the great god Pan—*
(Peep through the boughs, and see !)—
He plays on his pipes Arcadian
Under the dark oak-tree.
But the boughs are dark round his sightless eyes—
And Dian, where is she ?
O follow, follow, and where she flies
Follow her flight with me !”

Slowly, dreamily, we crept
From the silent sleeping park,

Join'd the merry throng that swept
Townward through the summer dark.
Shining round our path again,
Dian flash'd before the train,
In upon our comrades shone,
Smiled and beckon'd, bounding on !
Satyrs brown in corduroys
Smoked their pipes and join'd in song
Gamesome girls and merry boys
Fondled as we swept along ;
Here a flush'd Bacchante prest.
Heavy head and crumpled bonnet
On her drowsy lover's breast,
Sprawling drowsily upon it ;
Flush'd from dancing sports of Pan
Sat the little artizan,
With his wife and children three,
And the baby on his knee ;
Here a little milliner,
Smart in silk and shape-improver,

All the happy Spring astir
In her veins, sat by her lover ;
Mounted somewhere on the train,
Pan on the accordion played !
Rough feet shuffled to the strain,
Happy hearts the spell obeyed ;
While fair Dian, looking in,
Saw the throng and heard the din,
Touch'd the young heads and the grey
With the magic of the May !

*“ O who will worship the great god Pan,
Where life runs wild and free ?
Form of a faun and soul of a man,
He playeth eternallie.
And Dian is out on the azure waste
As bright as bright can be ! ”
O my arm embraced my love's small waist,
And my love crept close to me !*

THE FIRST DAY.

When we reached the streets of stone
Dian there was bright before us,
Wading naked and alone
In the pools of heaven o'er us !
Fainter came the wood-god's sound
As we crossed the Bridge, and there
Saw the City splendour-crown'd
Sleeping dark in silver air ;
Saw the river dark beneath
Rippling dim to Dian's breath.
Phillis nestling to my side
Watch'd the sad street-walker pass,
Hollow-voiced and weary-eyed,
Painted underneath the gas.
Paler, sadder, looked the moon,
Sadder grew the old sweet tune ;
Shapes of sorrow and despair
Flitted ghostwise in the air,
And among them, wan and slow,
Stalked the spectral Shape of Woe—

Piercèd hands and piercèd feet
Passing on from street to street ;
Silently behind Him crept
Pallid Magdalens who wept !
All the world at His footfall
Darken'd, and the music ceased—
Dark and sacrificial
Loom'd the altars of the priest,
All the magic died away
And the music of the May.

*“ O who will worship the great god Pan
Here in the streets with me ?
Sad and tearful and weary and wan
Is the god who died on the Tree ;
But Pan is under and Dian above,
Though the dead god cannot see,
And the merry music of youth and love
Returns eternallie ! ”*

Homeward went my love and I
To our lodging near the sky ;
There beside the snow-white bed
Dian stood with radiant eyes !
Smiled a moment ere she fled—
Then, with halo round her head,
Hung above us in the skies !

By the casement open wide
Long we watch'd her side by side ;
While from the dark streets around
Came again the sylvan sound—
Pan was softly piping *there*
As he pipes in field and grove,
Conquering sorrow and despair
With the strains of life and love !

Phillis in her bedgown white
Kissed me, standing in the moon ;
Louder, sweeter, through the night
Rang the olden antique tune ;

Gently on my knee I drew her
Smiling as I heard her say,
All her warm life kindling through her,
“Dearest, what a happy day !”
“ ‘Tis a happy world,” I said ;
“Pan still pipes, though Christ is dead !”

BLUSHING he ceased, and folded up the scroll,
While Sappho Syntax through her spectacles
Looked grave as Pallas, and the Graces hung
Their pink-white cheeks and titter'd among their curls.
Dan Paumanok the Yankee pantheist
Was first to speak ; quoth he, "I like that song !
It suits me, it tastes pleasant in the mouth ;
But Christ is just as much alive as Pan,
Not less or more ; and for the Magdalen,
I guess she suits me too. I beckon her
To an appointment, and she smiling comes :
The paint upon her lips is just as good
As roses, and her loose wild dress surpasses
The lily's raiment——"

He was talking on,
When Douglas interposed—"May I suggest
The moral of the ditty? It is here:
The joys of costermongers and their wenches,
Of poets and their sweethearts, vindicate
Nature's loose morals and the primal Fall.
Eat, drink, be merry—*carpe diem*—since
Man is a Satyr; half a beast at best,
When wholly so, most happy! Am I right,
Madonna?" This to Lady Barbara,
Who sat with pensive cheek upon her hand,
Her bright eyes tender with some summer dream.
"Nay, Fool!" she sighed; and "Nay," cried Verity,
With delicate nostril breathing vestal fire,
"The passionate eternal purity,
Bright Artemis, who walks the fields of night
And trims with lustrous hands the lamps of heaven,
Rebukes the eternal riot of the sense!
Woe to the land wherein the Satyr reigns,
And Pan usurps Apollo's ivory throne!

Thank God we Englishmen at last have heard,
Amidst the pagan orgy and the shame
Of yonder City, Nature's warning voice
Of Earthquake,—with the wine-cup raised to drink,
Have read the handwriting on the riven wall
In characters of His eternal fire ! ”

“ Superfluous was the warning,” interposed
Wormwood, the pessimist philosopher ;
“ Man needs no miracle to attest the law
Which made him and preserves him miserable !
Like fabled Tantalus in the poet's song,
In aquis querit aquas, and pursues
The ever-flying apple. Let him gladden
A little in the sunshine if he can—
To-morrow he must die ! ”

“ Man *cannot* die ! ”

Shrill'd the sleek pantheist, Spinoza Smith ;
“ For though the individual perishes,
The sum Divine, cipher of which Man is,

Abides imperishable. Thought alone
Is God, and is the only Absolute ;
And Thought remains though men and systems fade.
The music lasts, the instrument is changed :
Thought was, is, and shall be ; Thought has at last
Become material in Humanity.
The consciousness of the Eternal flames
Upon the mirror of thy consciousness,
And for a moment while the splendour lasts
Thou knowest and perceivest. Die, and lo !
The light that was and is thy consciousness
Abides divine and indestructible,—
Invisible, with power to re-emerge
In forms material, other instruments,
In forms and hues which figure Thought divine ;
Yea, even letters, which like hieroglyphs
Preserve the eternal attributes of Soul.
Thus man is God, and therefore cannot die.”

Quoth Paumanok dryly, “What you say is true,

But with interpretations ! Man emerges
From the Divine Idea, to gain, not lose,
Identity, and once identified
I guess he cannot once again retire
Impersonal ; having become as God
By knowing and perceiving, he remains
Godlike, immortal, and has vanquish'd Death ! ”

“ We wander,” said Queen Barbara with a smile,
“ Far from our starting-place. Great Rome still stands
Upon the solid ground, the mighty rock ;
Philosophy with heavy and weary wing
Still seeks to rise, but flaps along the ground ;
And poets’ dreams of fairyland and gods
Are fantasies too faint for flesh and blood.”

Then Cuthbert spoke, our modern Abelard—
The Church’s outcast, foe of all the creeds,
But most at war with his own unbelief,
A priest at heart, yet scorning every form

Of priesthood, dim-eyed through excess of light,
Believing nought, believing everything,
And groping through his doubts he knew not whither.
“ Rome conquer'd where she crown'd the hopes of man
With a celestial promise, but she failed
Where the old pagan triumphed—in a joy
Material, archetypal, quick not dead,
That met the happy needs of human life.
We are mortal and immortal ; mortal first,
Women and men, although eternal souls ;
And warring with the laws of life and love,
Rejecting flesh which symbolises God,
Blind to the law of Nature, seeing not
Thought and material are but woof and web,
Scorning the animal instinct and its pleas
For sunshine and free light, free exercise
Of life and breath, Rome turned the world she ruled
Into a lazar-den and sepulchra.
She proved Man cannot die, but failed to prove
That Man is fit to live ; she comforted

The grief of Man, but caused the tears she dried ;
She slew the idolatries of heathendom,
But made an image of the living God,
And lapsed, as all idolaters must lapse,
To darkness and despair. Yet she endures,—
The blind old Mother, grovelling on the ground
In purple sad as sackcloth, and the world
Still sees the sceptre that is but a reed
Shake in her palsied hand. Too weary and old
To learn the lesson that the infant Man
Is prattling at her knee, she lieth prone,
And measures—her own grave !”

So saying, he turned
To one who stood and listened at his side—
Sparkle, Professor of the Institute,—
A tall lithe man, brown as a mountaineer,
Who through a glittering eyeglass, the bright pane
Fix'd in his intellectual dwelling-house,
Half study, half observatory, gazed
Serenely on the follies of the world.

"Right, right, dear Cuthbert," answering his look,
Sparkle replied ; "and yet, and yet—who knows ?
I have often thought with Comte that fallen Rome
Might yet arise, if she would cast aside
Her supernatural fancies and baptize
Us wandering priests of Science, fashioning
A truly nobler order of the Wise
To rule the world and spread the solemn creed
Of Nature and the Law.. She wastes her life
Mourning her Eldest Born, that beauteous soul
Who ere He perish'd, centuries ago,
Promised so wonderfully that the world
Is haunted by His memory even now !
Well, that is o'er, the golden bowl is broken,
The fair head still, within its Eastern grave ;
But we who have come upon a stormier time,
The apostles of a sterner, saner creed,
Would gladly wake the Mother from her dream
And seat her on the throne of human thought.
Man craves a creed—we bring it ; seeks a rule

Imperial,—she might wield it as of old ;
Demands a priesthood,—we who follow Truth,
Far as the limits of the Knowable,
Would form that priesthood,—ay, and cheerfully
Elect our Pope and give him ample power,
Scarce stopping at infallibility !
'Tis sad so perfect a machinery
Should rust away dishonoured and disused
For lack of all it needs—a Hierarchy
Which might restore it for the use of men !”

Two priests of Rome, outcast, yet still of Rome,
(Since he who once hath ta'en the priestly garb
Is ever a priest), were in that company :
Both smiled, but neither answer'd ; silent men,
With eyes that seem'd to suffer from the light
They shed on others, even there, amid
That throng of shallow or rebellious souls,
They both were busy sowing subtle seeds
That sprout by midnight. Well they knew, in sooth,

How oft the pathos of a creed forlorn
Acts magnet-like on sympathetic clay
Sighing without a foothold. What had grown
In pain and persecution still (they prayed),
After long centuries of pomp and pride
Might, under persecution, rise again.
Their patient faces touch'd a piteous chord
Within me; and as wistfully they watched
The sunset fading like a blackening brand,
Both speechless, faintly flush'd with that sad light,
While Lady Barbara stirred upon her seat,
Signing dismissal to her wearied court
Whose yawns proclaim'd the dinner-hour at hand,
I craved again the singer's privilege
And sang of Roman Rizpah's last despair :

O Rizpah, Mother of Nations, the days of whose glory are done,
Moaning alone in the darkness, thou countest—the bones of
thy Son !

The Cross is vacant above thee, and He is no longer thereon—
A wind came out of the night, and He fell like a leaf, and was
gone.

But wearily through the ages, searching the sands of the years,
Thou didst gather His bones together, and wash them, Madonna,
with tears.

They have taken thy crown, O Rizpah, and driven thee forth
with the swine,
But the bones of thy Son they have left thee ; yea, kiss them
and clasp—they are thine !

Thou canst not piece them together, or hang them up yonder
afresh,
The skull hath no eye within it, the feet and the hands are not
flesh.

Thou 'moanest an old incantation, thou troublest the world
with thy cries—
Ah God, if the bones should hear thee, and join once again, and
arise !

In the night of the seven-hill'd City, discrown'd and disrobed
and undone,
Thou waitest a sign, O Madonna, and countest the bones of
thy Son !

The Second Day.

(*ANTHROPOMORPHISM.*)



THE SECOND DAY.

Two miles of field and wood as flies the crow,
But thrice two miles of azure curves and bends
As winds the peaceful river, turning oft
With lingering feet as turns and turns again
On her own footprints some sweet dreaming maid
Who gathers ferns and flowers with listless hand,
Lay like a jewel a green promontory
Sparkling bright emerald on the breast of Tweed.
Thither next day our happy company
In barges, boats, and shallops idly rowed,
A bright flotilla, all the rainbow's hues
Fluttering in sunshine and in azure depths
Brokenly mirror'd; Satyrs, Nymphs, and Fauns,
The Graces under pink silk parasols,
The Muses under Gainsborough hats of straw,

Venus, white-vestured and without her doves,
Chattering to Vulcan in blue spectacles,
The modern Syrens, singing as they dipt
White hands in crystal o'er the shallop's side,
Followed each other merrily as we went.

And here the willow trailed her yellow locks
In golden shallows whence the kingfisher
Flashed like a living topaz and was gone ;
And here the clustering water-lilies spread
Their oiled leaves and alabaster cups,
Tangled amid the river's sedgy hair ;

And there from shadowy oaks that fringed the stream
The squirrel stood upright and lookt at us
With beaded eyes ; and all the flowery banks
Were loud with hum of bees and song of birds ;
And often on the smooth and silent pools,
Brimful of golden warmth and heavenly light,
The salmon sprang a foot into the sun,
Sparkled in panoply of silver mail,
And sank in the circle of his own bright leap !

For on the promontory which we sought
A Hermit in the olden time had dwelt,
White-hair'd, white-bearded, cress and pulse his food,
The crystal stream his drink ; and still the rock
Preserved the outline of his mossy cell ;
And where his naked foot had press'd the grass
Under the shadowy boughs of oak and beech,
The blue of heaven had fallen and blossom'd up
In azure harebells multitudinous,
For ever misted with their own soft breath
Of sunless summer dew.

Gaily we sailed,
And after many windings serpentine
We reached the place. Against the grassy banks
Our boats discharged their many-coloured freight,
Till all the flowery slopes and dusky glades
Were busy and bright with smiling human shapes ;
And through the warm and honeysuckled ways,
Tangled with bramble, ferns, and foxglove bells,
We pushed our path until we found indeed

The mossy cell, with overhanging eaves
Encalendured with lichens like the Cross,
And down below the dewy grass, knee-deep,
And countless hyacinths with their waxen stems
And fairy bells of thin transparent blue.
Most cool and still, embower'd on every side,
With just a peep of azure overhead,
Was that sweet sanctuary, hush'd as a nest
Deserted, with no stir of summer sound;
And down the mossy rock a crystal dew
Stole coldly, while one sparkling minute drop
Fell like quicksilver on a flowering fern,
Gleam'd, and rolled luminous to the chill green ground.

Hard by the cell we found an open lawn
Sprinkled with fronds of fern and azure flowers,
And here full soon we spread our snowy cloths
And picnick'd in the sunlight. From the boughs
The gold-bill'd blackbird and the blue-wing'd jay
Gazed down on such a scene as birds beheld

When Oberon's enchanted cavaliers
Stole forth to banquet underneath the moon ;
And they whose scientific bolts and brooms
Had driven the fairies forth from field and farm,
So that the shepherdess and dairymaid
No longer fear the roguish pixy's thumb
Punishing idleness, were merriest there,
And laughed as loud as if the work-a-day world
Were sweetly haunted yet ! In lily hands
The light glass tinkled, while the beaded wine
Cream'd and ran o'er, and every learnèd lap
Was like a Dryad's, full of ripen'd fruit ;
And presently for sport our Satyrs plucked
Flowers of the wood, and pelted merrily
Some saucy-eyed Bacchantes, who upsprang
White-bosom'd, dimple-breasted, and escaped
Hotly pursued into the flowery glades—
Whence silvery peals of laughter, stifled cries,
Were wafted to us on the summer air.

Then to her throne, a high and mossy bank
Emblazon'd with the crowsfoot's dusky gold,
Our Barbara moved, with royally lifted hand
Enjoining silence ; happily her court
Clustered about her, as she smiled and cried—
“ Surround me and attend, all ye whose souls,
Though glad with summer light and warm with milk
Of Venus (which we moderns call champagne !)
Remember that Great Problem, and our oath
Each day to take it as a summer theme.
Here on this very spot, in yonder cell,
The holy Hermit dwelt and ponder'd it
Alone, so many a hundred years ago.
Alas ! how few in this our feverish age
Dare play the hermit now ? Our anchorites
Are noisy men, who tell their beads for show,
And print their prosings in the magazines
Beside the gigman's diatribes at “ God,”
Spelt with a little “ g ” !

A quiet voice,

That of a bright-eyed preacher from the north—
(Our Norman, ripe and mellow as Friar Tuck,
Yet tender-soul'd as sweet Maid Marian !)—
Made echo :—“ Wisely spoken ! ” Here and there
A few sad thinkers crawl on hands and knees
Into the temples of the solitude ;
But these, being reverent, are awed and dumb,—
Unlike the jaunty, dapper, newly breech'd
Child of the age, who, strutting in the sun
Selling his birthright for a penman's praise,
Denies his Heavenly Father ! ”

“ Pardon me,”

Broke in the scoffer, Douglas Sutherland,
“ The age we live in has its vanities
I grant you, but it stands supreme in this,—
The use of soap and water, the crusade
Still needful against other-worldliness.
If holiness be gauged by length of nail,
Heart's purity by epidermic crust,
I grant your anchorites were blessed men ;

THE SECOND DAY.

If not, quite otherwise ; and for the rest,
The Heavenly Father they perceived and praised,
Their magnified non-natural Heavenly Father,
Was, like themselves, a dull old Anchorite,
Unclean and useless, brooding in a den
With Fever for his servant, Pestilence
To scatter forth his breathings. Nowadays
We prize a cleanlier Godhead, scorning dreams
Which at the best are childish,—in a word,
Anthropomorphic !”

Then that other's face,
A little angry, for a burning soul
With faith at white heat cannot jest with fire,
Flash'd scornfully and almost pityingly—
“The babe must have his rattle, and the child
His catchword ! Verily, Science is at best
A foolish Virgin, thinking to destroy
The Eternal Verity with a cumbrous phrase !
Anthropomorphic, say you, is the dream,—
A man's, an infant's, vision of himself

Flashed upon mental darkness? Be it so.
Then as a child that in the cradle lies
And feels the darkness stir, and seems to feel
The brightness of a face he cannot see,
I, who am old, accept the happy dream,
And, since you will it so, the phrase as well.
Go, range the empty heaven of fantasy
Upon Spinoza's wing'd horse of brass
(Which, coming down to earth with thunder-shock,
Stuns him that rides and robs him of an eye),
Or lose your wits in Hegel's cloud of words,
Or prone on hands and knees inspect the worms
With Darwin, or with Spencer blankly stare
At vacuum and the Inconceivable;
But what if, like those leaders, lonely men,
You find yourselves at last without a Friend?
Meantime I stretch a hand out in the darkness
And touch—my Father's; nay, I wake and gaze,
And lo! I see the very Face and Form
I have dream'd of; and, a child once more, I say

'Our Father,' and I know my prayer is heard !
God help me if my God be not indeed
The Father of my simple childish faith !"

Then Douglas shrugged his shoulders, scorning speech
With one in Superstition's swaddling clothes ;
But something in the brave benignant face,
Bright-eyed and lofty-brow'd, and in the voice
So tender with its soft deep Highland burr,
Subdued us, and we listened reverently
Ev'n where we doubted most ; and when he ceased
A certain timid echo in our hearts
Murmur'd approval. Thereupon our Queen
Besought him, having faith so absolute,
To carry our fitful torch of tale-telling
A little space that day, then hand it on
To the next, and next. He shook his head and smiled,
Then answer'd, being urged—" To me at least
Your Problem is no Problem after all—
I solved it at my Heavenly Father's knee,

Spelling His Name out of the Book Divine,
And looking up into those loving eyes
With which He shines upon the worst and best ;
But since you wish it, I will tell a tale
Of that same heavenly Presence—how it came
To one who was in heart a little child,
But who, being lessen'd by the over-wise,
Beheld the gentle dream dissolve away ? ”

Then, without further prelude, he began
This story of the monk Serapion,
Who in the evening of his days embraced
The sweet anthropomorphic heresy.

Serapion.**I.**

On the mountain heights, in a cell of stone,
Dwelt Serapion ;
There, winter and summer, he linger'd alone.

Most drear was the mountain and dismal the cell ;
Yet he loved them well—
Contented and glad in their silence to dwell.

And ever his face wore an innocent ray,
And his spirit was gay,
And he sang, like the angels who sing far away !

The goatherd, who gathered his flocks ere the night,
In the red sunset light,
Heard the voice ring above him, from height on to height.

Ofttimes, from his cell on the cold mountain's crown,
 He came merrily down,
And stood, with a smile, 'mid the folk in the town

With raiment all ragged, worn shoon on his feet,
 He walk'd in the street,
Yet his eyes were so happy, his voice was so sweet !

And ever his face wore the grace and the gleam
 Of a beautiful dream,
Like the light of the sun shed asleep on a stream !

And the folk cried aloud, as they gathered to see :
 “ Of all men that be,
The brightest and happiest surely is he ! ”

And they question'd : “ O ! why is thy face ever bright,
 And thy spirit so light,
Down here in the valley, up there on the height ? ”

He answer'd : “ What makes me so happy and gay
 Wheresoever I stray ?
The Lord I behold all the night, all the day !

“ He walks like a Shepherd in raiment of gold
On the mountain-tops cold ;
He comes to my cell ; on my knees I behold.

“ He smiles like my father who died long ago ;
His eyes sweetly glow—
Those eyes are as sapphires ; His beard is as snow !

“ Yea, night-time and day-time he comes to my call,
The dear Father of all,
With a face ever fair, with a solemn footfall ! ”

Then the folk cried again : “ Of all mortals that be,
Surely gladdest is he ! ”
Wise monks from afar came to hear and to see.

II.

As they climb'd through the snows to his cell, they could
hear
His voice ringing clear,
In a hymn to the Lord who for ever seem'd near.

They enter'd and saw him. He sat like a wight
Who beholds some strange sight—
Face fix'd, his eyes shining, most peaceful and bright !
“O brother ! what makes thee so happy ?” they cried.
With a smile he replied :
“The Lord who so loves me, my Guardian and Guide !
“He comes in the night and He comes in the day
From his Heaven far away ;
I feel His soft touch on my hair, as I pray.
“He smiles with grave eyes like my father long dead,
His hand bows my head,
From the breath of His nostrils a blessing is shed !”
Through their ranks as they listened a cold shudder ran,
And the murmur began :
“Can God have the touch and the breath of a man ?
“No soul can conceive Him, no sight may descry
The Most Strange, the Most High,
Not the quick when they live, not the holy who die.”

THE SECOND DAY.

But Serapion answer'd : " I hear and I see ;
He comes hourly to me ;
He speaks in mine ear, as I pray on my knee ! "

They murmur'd : " Blaspheme not ! He dwells far away ;
None fathom Him may ;
For He is not as man, nor is fashion'd of clay.

" Can the God we conceive not have ears and have eyes ?
Who sayeth so, lies !
Cast thy heresy off, hear our words, and be wise !

" For God is not flesh, as His worshippers be—
Nay, a Spirit is He,
Not shapen for mortals to hear or to see.

" Inconceivable, Holy, Divine, evermore,
All His works ruling o'er ;
Yet by these we conceive Him, and darkly adore."

Then Serapion answer'd : " How strange ! For He seems,
In my beautiful dreams,
To be near, with a kind face that brightens and beams ! "

They murmur'd : " These fancies are false and abhorred ;

Since the God who is Lord

Neither face hath nor form, though His wrath is a sword !

' Put the vision behind thee ! Be sure no man's eye

Can conceive or descry

What is hidden from angels of God in the sky ! "

But Serapion answer'd : " He comes to my prayer :

He is kind, He is fair ;

His smile is as sunlight, that sleeps on the air.

" Not as men, but more splendid and stately and tall

Is the Father of all.

He walks on the snows with a solemn footfall ! "

But they cried : " By some fiend is thy solitude stirred !

Shall the Light and the Word,

The Spirit Almighty, be seen and be heard ?

" Put the vision aside ; like a dream let it flit,

And the shadow of it ;

Lest the heresy drive thee, accurst, to the Pit."

THE SECOND DAY.

They spake and he listened. For nights and for days
He hark'd in amaze,
While they proved that a Phantom had gladden'd his gaze.

At last all was clear, and his forehead was bent
In submissive assent.

They confess'd him and bless'd him, and joyfully went.

III.

There he sat, still as a stone, sadly thinking it o'er,
At his desolate door.

Then, alone in his cell, tried to pray, as before.

He reached out his arms to the cold, empty air,
Kneeling woefully there ;
He prayed unto God ; but none came to his prayer.

He walked from his cell on the cold mountain's crown,
Wending silently down,
Till he stood as before, 'mid the folk in the town

With raiment all ragged, worn shoon on his feet,
He stood in the street;
And his eyes were not happy, his voice was not sweet!

The gladness was gone that made golden his face;
Yea, there linger'd no trace
Of the smile and the sunshine, the peace and the grace.

And the folk whisper'd low, as they gathered to see—
“ Of all men that be,
The saddest and weariest surely is he ! ”

He climb'd up the mountain, and sat there alone;
And his spirit made moan—
“ My God, they have slain Thee ! My God, Thou art
gone ! ”

“ Their breath hath destroy'd Thee, my Father ! ” he said—
“ Thou art lost ! Thou art fled ! ”
And the sense of his doom was as dust on his head.

IV.

The goatherd still gather'd his flocks ere the night,
In the red sunset-light ;
But heard no voice singing, afar on the height !

Silent we cluster'd when the tale was done,
Till Verity exclaimed : " As that lone monk
Who suffered pedants to destroy his God,
So is our England now ! For many years
She dwelt apart and ponder'd that pure thought
Which turned to heavenly song in Milton's mouth,
And never questioning taught her wisest sons
To bow their heads beneath the Father's hand ;
Then in an evil hour her ear was turn'd
To specious pleadings which profaned the faith
And quickened unbelieving ; from that hour
Faith faded, the heroic stature sank
Cubit by cubit, and her heroes changed
To problem-haunted pygmies, clustering mites
On the green cheese of Science. Faugh, how rank
The stale thing smells, to nostrils which have drunk
The pure air sweeten'd by the mountain snows
Where men even yet may find the living God ! "

Cried Sparkle quickly, "I will grant you, Faith
Was marvellous, when Faith was possible !
But which is best for outcast Nature's Son,
Fatherless, illegitimately born,
And at the best remitted to the care
Of an abandon'd mother—which is best,
To play the farce of filial faith to One
Who utterly declines to show His face,
Nay, who, if He exists, denies Himself,
And leaves His offspring unprovided for,
Or boldly, calmly, facing all events,
To say, 'In all the world where'er I search
I find no trace of Fatherhood at all,
No token of His kindness or His care,—
Only inexorable Law pursuing
Me and my brethren, and that greater one,
Nature, our mother. Blessings upon *her*,
Upon her poor blind eyes and beauteous face
Still sunny with insufferable love !
Blessings upon *her*, and sweet reverence,

Who loveth us, her children ! On her breast
We wakened, ever in her circling arms
We found kind shelter ; when our hearts are sore,
Our spirits weary, she can comfort us
With countless ministrations, woven smiles
Of light and flowers and sunshine ; when at last
We are wearied out with our brief day of life,
She hath a bed of quiet ready, strewn
With grass and scented shadow. Bid me kneel
To her who never fail'd in acts of love,
And lo ! how eagerly, how reverently,
I haste to bend the knee ; but bid me kneel
To Him I know not, who since life began
Hath never stood acknowledged or revealed,
And lo ! I rise erect with folded arms
In the full pride and privilege of Man,
Rejecting, scorning, or denying Him !
How hath He helped me ? When my finger ached
Or my soul sicken'd of some dark disease,
Where was my Father—where was He for whom

I shriek'd through all the watches of the night
In pain and protestation ? Did He come
To comfort and sustain me ? When I shrank
Affrighted from the clammy hands of Death,
When in mine arms the maiden of my love
Lay dead and cold, slain by her own first kiss,
Where was the Father that ye vaunt so much ?
I owe Him life ? Perchance. Love too ? Ah me,
A little love to mock a little life
Forlorn, and swiftly flying ! He hath chosen,
To leave me in the wilderness of thought
Abandon'd and rejected ; I in turn,
Finding He fails me in my hour of need,
Finding He cannot save me from the fangs
Of His own bloodhounds, Death and Force and Law,
Reject Him, and abandon that old dream
Of ever looking on a Father's face ! ”

More would his lips have utter'd in a strain
By some deemed blasphemous, but angry cries

Broke in upon the current of his speech ;
And many there, remembering the fear
Which drove them thither from the City's streets,
Drew timorously together, as if fearing
The Earthquake's jaws might open under them.
“Enough !” cried Barbara—“you touch the harp
Of feeling with too strenuous a touch,
And jar the delicate chords too cruelly !
For me, I mourn the faith which long ago
Led men into the desert sands to pray,
And tomb'd the hermit in his narrow cell ;
Then love was pain, and pain was privilege,
And he who sought the Father was content
To find Him bleeding on the wayside Cross,
Or looking sadly from the Sepulchre.
Now who will justify the holiness
Of self-renouncement, shaming with some tale,
Quaint as a missal love-illuminèd,
Our peevish problem-haunted modernness ?
Come, Bishop, for you have not spoken yet,

Though clad in wisdom and in purity
As whitely as your ancestors, the monks."

Close to her side stood Bishop Eglantine,
The gentle priest who dwells an anchorite
Amid the busiest throngs of living men—
A man who, sitting at the laden board
Of Knowledge, looking with a longing eye
On the rare dainties that he must not touch,
Grows gaunt and lean with intellectual fasts ;
So spare, the soul seems shining through his flesh
Like light through alabaster. Tall he stood,
Upgazing through the thin transparent roof
Of leaves upon some peaceful sight in heaven,
And when he smiled in answer to her words
His smile was spectre-like and virginal,
Too faint for flesh and blood. Not far away
The plumper Bishop Primrose laughing sat,
Broad as his Church and sunnier than his creed,
And held a bright-eyed child between his knees.

A Roman lily and an English rose
Were these two prelates ; one proclaiming Christ
Ghostly and sad and sacrificial,
The other, Christ the brown young Shepherd, clad
With strength as with a garment, bending down
To lift a lambkin struggling among thorns,
And bear it on his back across the hills
Into the Master's fold.

Quoth Eglantine,
With courteous bow to all the circle round,
“Ev'n as you spoke my thoughts were far away
With one who tenderly renounced the flesh
And found in pain sweet comfort long ago.
Here is the tale—scarcely indeed a tale—
’Tis given in a monkish chronicle,
And is so brief, that he who runs may hear.”

Ramon Monat.

I.

HIDDEN from the light of day,
All his care to plead and pray,
In his cell sat Ramon Monat,
Gaunt and grey.

2.

Suddenly before his sight
Stood the Virgin robed in white,—
In her arms fresh-gather'd roses
Red and bright.

3.

“Ramon, Ramon,” murmur'd she,
“See the gifts I bring to thee,
Roses, red celestial roses,
Pluck'd by me !

4.

“ Walking in His gardens fair,
'Midst the golden glory there,
My sweet Son, the Lord Christ Jesus,
Hears thy prayer !

5.

“ Lo, He sendeth thee to-day
These blest flowers from far away ! ” . . .
Wildly sobbing, Ramon Monat
Answer'd “ Nay !

6.

“ Holy Mother, on thy breast
Let the flowers of rapture rest,—
Not for me—I am not worthy—
Gifts so blest !

7.

“ Ah, but if my brows might gain
(Hear me, though the prayer is vain),
For a moment's space, my Master's
Crown of pain ! ”

8.

From his sight the Virgin fair
Vanish'd, as he sank in prayer ;
Presently, again he saw her,
Standing there !

9.

Weeping bitterly she said,
“ See, the gift I bring instead—
Lo, the cruel crown of sorrow,
Bloody-red ! ”

10.

When the Virgin Mother mild,
Weeping like a little child,
Set the thorns on Ramon's forehead,
Ramon smiled !

11.

Lonely there for many a day,
Rack'd with anguish, gaunt and grey,
Happy with that crown of sorrow,
Ramon lay.

12.

Then, when 'twas his Master's will,
There they found him dead and chill,
Sweetly, in his crown of sorrow,
Smiling still !

"The lunatic, the anchorite, and the poet
Are of rank superstition all compact,"
Cried Douglas, lifting high his cap and bells;
"Your Ramon Monat wore his crown of thorns
Upon his pallid brow as jauntily
As Cæsar throws the purple round his limbs.
Such creatures on the body of Mother Church
Crawl'd thickly, till good Doctor Rational,
Call'd when the lady's state was perilous,
Said, 'Wash thyself—be clean, take exercise!'
And so the vermin died. He serves God best
Who loves his kind, and teaches them to rinse
Both soul and body, until both appear
As clean—as a sheep's heart!"

A speech so bold
Jarr'd with the gentle temper of the hour,
The peaceful woods, the summer afternoon,
The dreamy spirit of that sylvan scene.

"Peace, knave!" cried Barbara mock-seriously,
"Moments there are when even cap and bells
Must lose their privilege, and fools be dumb
For fear of stripes!"—and to him on the grass
She tossed a bunch of grapes, which Douglas caught
And munch'd in silence, lying on his back.
Then came a pause, so deep that we could hear
The breathing of the silence, the soft stir
Of birds among the boughs, the waterfall
Crooning itself to sleep within the woods.

Quoth Bishop Primrose: "Your ascetics shrank
Sense after sense, until their very souls
Became as mere Narcissi, pondering
Their own reflections, figuring in their pride
A moral catalepsy, death not life.
He serves God best who launches fearlessly
Out on the living waters, and proclaiming
The great celestial haven, leads the way
With all sails set, that the poor storm-toss'd fleet

Of Humankind may follow fearlessly !
Ev'n so the preachers of our Church have done,
Spreading glad tidings up and down the world,
And working out salvation for themselves
Through the redemption of the human race ! ”

“ Alas ! ” another speaker interposed,
“ The Storm is loud for ever on the seas,
And while the proud strong Churches of the creeds
Sail to and fro with golden argosies,
Each night a fleet of fishing-boats goes down
And no man heeds ! Science is tenderer ;
She puts a beacon on each rocky cape,
And sounds the shallows, that poor mariners
May know the seas their ships must navigate.
Meantime the tumult of Euroclydon
Roars on the Deep ; and mark ! the tempest blows
Not *to* but *from* the far-off Heavenly Land,
Beating the vessels back on dusky shores
To shipwreck close at home. I'd rather trust

The roughest pilot born upon the coast,
Familiar with the dangers round about,
Than any of your Priests who shut their eyes
And wring their hands and pray ! This world of ours
Is at the mercy of the elements ;
Who tries to weigh them ? Science does her best,
While poor Religion quakes, and conjures up
More spectres than the storm itself can breed."

He added : " Just the other day in church,
Drifted there Heaven knows how and Heaven knows
why,

I heard the preacher preach, and dreamed a dream ;
If you will have it, here it is in verse,
Rude as the maker, rugged as the theme,"—
And no one interposing, he began.

In a Fashionable Church.**L**

WHAT Shape is this with hands outreaching,
Walking the waters of Hell, and preaching ?
The waves are rolling beneath and glistening,
Each breaking wave is a white face, listening !

The rift is roaring, the rain is moaning—
His robe streams back as He stands intoning ;
With jet-black troughs the mad seas break at Him,
And the lightning springs, like a hissing snake, at Him !

God, doth He guess any soul can hear Him,
With the wind so wailing, the storm so near Him ?
Yet now and then sounds His voice of wonder there,
Like theplash of a shower in the pause of thunder, there.

The Devil sits by those waters evil,
Pensive, as is the wont of the Devil,
So bored and *blasé* his expression is
None would guess what his true profession is.

The waters and he are tired together
Of such eternally stormy weather ;
Always that wind is roaring busily,
Till the heart feels faint and the head rocks dizzily.

Always gusty both night and morrow !
No wonder the Devil is full of sorrow,
No wonder he sneers at the Figure preaching there
With bright eyes burning and hands outreaching there.

The Devil thinks, " What use of trying
To preach a sermon 'midst such a crying ?
If He bade the Almighty close His batteries,
The damn'd beneath Him might guess what the matter
is ! "

And lo ! the Figure with white robe streaming
Raises His hand while the winds are screaming—
As He stood on the earth when the Pharisees found Him,
He stands, and the same Storm beats around Him.

As long ago 'neath the empyrean
He walked on the waters Galilean,
With only the poor damn'd souls to discern it, He
Walks, and has walked through a long eternity !

God with the still small voice's calling !
Soft as rain on the grass 'tis falling,
Yet little blame to the souls who are near to it
If they break and groan and give no ear to it !

Something it is for the damn'd below Him
To see the patient Figure and know Him !
What a wind ! what a raining and roaring now !
Lightning, thunder, and black rain pouring now !

II.

Up with a start I waken groaning,
And hear sweet Honeydew's voice intoning.
Only a dream!—and in church I am again,
Half asleep, in the midst of the sham again!

Hark! how the soft-eyed, soft-voiced creature
Preaches, with sweetness in every feature!
The ladies listen, the maids sit dutiful,
The spinsters quiver, and murmur, "Beautiful!"

Surely as every Sunday passes
The scented silken superior classes
Flutter flounces and flash like sunny dew
Around the Reverend Mr. Honeydew.

Cambric handkerchiefs scatter scent about,
Pomaded heads are devoutly bent about,
Silks are rustling, lips are muttering,
To the dear man's emotional pausing and fluttering.

The actor with his shaven cheek here
Studies his art and learns to speak here ;
Every period properly weighted is,
With gentle matter the sermon freighted is.

Sir Midas, portly and resplendent,
With the little Midases attendant,
And Lady Midas, all eyes upon her here,
Sit and smile in the pew of honour here.

Even the agnostic and revolter
Gather before this Chapel's altar,
For none of the bigot's mad insanity
Deforms dear Honeydew's Christianity.

In such an excellent pastor's leading,
So full of brightness and dainty breeding,
Even the faith ecclesiastical
Seems entertaining and less fantastical !

The preacher is an excellent fellow !
His matter and manner are ever mellow. . . .
But afar the tempest of Hell is thundering,
The Figure preaching, the Devil wondering !

STRANGE as some low and far off thunder-peal
Heard in the still heat of a summer day,
While shepherds looking upward in the sun
See purple banks of cloud that ominously
Roll in the distance, came the speaker's words ;
And as they ended we beheld indeed
Hell, or Creation adumbrating Hell,
Breathing with ululations of despair.
Hearing the wails of sin, the moans of men,
The hopeless, ceaseless wash of weary lives
Which sigh for sunlight or some shore of peace,
We pitied that supreme despairing Shape
Who treads the waves of woe with luminous feet,
And since He cannot still them, grows as sad
As the wild waters He is walking on.

And all were silent until Barbara rose
And sigh'd: "The sun is sinking in the west;
Our happy day is ended—let us go!"
And murmuring like bees around the queen
We wandered slowly to the river-side.

Now like a gentle herdsman stood the sun
Pausing upon the brae-tops while he drove
His fleecy flocks of cloud into their fold
Beneath the faintly glimmering evening star;
And coming from the shadow of the woods,
Hushing our cries, we saw the gloaming grow,
The trees behind us black, the prospects dim,
But all things looming large in lustrous air,
The river-pools as full of deep strange light
As the still sky. The air, too, seem'd alive
With ominous sound akin to that strange light:
The bull-frogs croaking from the river shallows,
The cat-owl calling from the distant glade,
The murmuring waterfall now faintly heard

Drowsy and half asleep. Then from the woods
Rang sudden laughter, sharp and silvery clear,
Of merry maidens, and the music seem'd
As hollow as a bell, and when we spoke
Our voices had an eerie and empty sound
As if through vast and echoing corridors
We walked in awe.

But soon upon the stream

Our bright flotilla homeward sailed again,
And ere we reached the silent Priory woods
The azure gates of darkness, swinging wide,
Revealed the lucent starry-paven floors,
And all the lamps of heaven ranged in rows
Each in its order round the Altar-steps,
From which a pale and silver-vestured Moon
Pour'd bright ablution and upraised the Host.

Then, as the glory wrapt us round and round,
And the dark river, sparkling to our oars,
Flash'd back the dewy splendour, soft and low
Some voices joined in song ; and thus they sang :—

Storm in the night ! and a voice in the Storm is crying :
“ They have taken my Lord, and I know not where He is lying ! ”

“ I sat in the Tomb by His side, with a soul unshaken,
I chafed His clay-cold hands,—for I knew He must waken.

“ Before He closed His eyes, He said to the weeping—
‘ Tis but a little while—I shall wake from sleeping ! ’

“ Cold and stiff He lay, not seeing or hearing ;
The Tomb was sealed with a rock,—but I sat unfearing.

“ For a light lay on His eyes, and His face was gleaming ;
I heard Him sigh in His sleep, and thought ‘ He is dreaming ! ’

“ And then, with a thunder-peal, the rock was riven ;
Bright, in the mouth of the Tomb, stood Angels of Heaven !

“ He did not stir, though I whispered, ‘ Master, awaken ! ’ . . .
Then brightness blinded my eyes,—and lo, He was taken !

“ I woke in the Tomb alone, and the wind chill’d through me :
‘ O Master,’ I moan’d, ‘ remember Thy promise to me ! ’

“ I crept through the night and sought Him. . . . Hither and
thither
The swift Moon walk’d, and the white-tooth’d Sea ran with her.

“ I stole from palace to palace, from prison to prison,
I found no trace of my Lord, though they said ‘ He hath risen ! ’

"I heard the Nations weeping—I questioned the Nations :
One said, 'He is dead !' another, 'He lives—have patience !'

"Twice—on the desert sands, in the City Holy,
I have found two piercèd footprints, vanishing slowly !

"Wearily still I wander and still pursue Him—
He promised and I await Him, wailing unto Him !

"And now they say, 'He is dead—hath the world forsaken.'
Ah no, He hath promised !—hath waken'd,—or will awaken !"

Storm in the night ! and a voice in the storm still crying :
"They have taken my Lord, and I know not where He is lying !"

The Third Day.

(*THIS WORLD.*)



THE THIRD DAY.

Next day it storm'd. Awakening I gazed forth,
And saw a slanting wall of liquid gray
Shutting out park and pale, while overhead
The black clouds droop'd their banners drifting east ;
Then gazing southward, through the mists I saw
The ghostly glimmer of the distant Ocean ;
Desolate as a soul that leaps from heaven,
The wild rain flung itself into the sea,
And sobbing, choked and drown'd !

The day drew on.

Slowly at intervals, with dismal yawns,
The guests descended to the breakfast-rooms,
And afterwards they scatter'd hither and thither :
Some to the drawing-room to lounge and flirt,
Some to the billiard-room, whence soon there came
The light sharp rattle of the ivory ball ;

Some to the library, others to the porch,
To lounge there, pipe in mouth, and watch the weather.
A few, with Sappho Syntax at their head,
Donned their goloshes and their waterproofs,
And faced the Storm ; but many kept apart
Until the lunch-bell rang ; then, luncheon o'er,
More straggling up and down from room to room,
Till, as the hum spreads through a throng of bees
That the queen bee is near, and straightway all
Throng to the honey'd centre of the hive,
The murmur spread that Barbara held her court
In the great drawing-room ; whither hastening,
We found her, throned upon an ottoman,
Sparkle, high priest of Science, at her side,
And murmuring silken periods in her ear.

"Dreary indeed, flat, dreary and confined,
As this our Priory on a day of rain,
With walls of liquid black on every side,
Must the sad Earth have seemed ere Science rose

To tear the veil from Nature's face, and show
The wonders of the illimitable Void.
A thousand years after the birth of Christ,
Religion, like the Spirit of the Storm,
Obscured the open heaven, veiled land and tide,
And made Creation dark ; and no man knew
The clime wherein he dwelt, or dared explore
His earthly habitation ; but the tide
Of Superstition, like another Flood,
Submerged the landmarks, hid the continents,
And mingled black with the unpastured Sea.
Then, like a cumbrous Ark, the Church survived,
And resting on the Ararat of Rome,
Rock'd to the wash of waters—those within,
Arrayed in priestly raiment, crying aloud,
‘Woe ! woe to man ! the Day of Doom is near !’
Honour to those who in that awful hour
Flew forth upon the waves like fearless doves,
And though the craven priests cried out ‘ Beware ! ’
Faced the wild darkness and the winds of heaven,

Seeking for glimpses of the solid land !
Then some came circling back with wearied wings,
And many vanished never to return ;
A few, the fleetest and most strong of flight,
Returning after many wanderings,
Brought with them, as the dove its olive branch,
Tidings of gladness and a sunlit world !”

Then murmured Leslie Lambe with kindling cheeks,
“Doves, say you ? Doves ? I’ faith, it needed *then*
The eagle’s pinion and the eagle’s eye
To penetrate that melancholy waste.
Think of Magellan ! what an eagle, he !—
The man of marble who in Hell’s despite
Unto his lonely purpose held unmoved,
And sailing with unconquerable wing
Across that blackness, came at last in sight
Of a new Heaven sown with unknown stars,
And underneath, a new and wondrous World.
Stranger the problem he, the undaunted, solved

Than all your problems of a world to come.
Fie on your poets, fools of fantasy,
That never one hath sung that hero's praise ! ”

Then I remember'd an old Song o' the Sea
Put in the mouth of one who sailed the main
With that stern captain, and within his arms
Held him when, slain by poisonous darts, he died ;
The words, the rhyme, kept time within my brain
Like wild sea-surges as the other spake ;
And when, with eager glance around, he ceased,
I craved permission of our smiling Queen,
And having quickly gained it, thus began :—

The Voyage of Magellan.

(SPOKEN IN THE PERSON OF ONE OF HIS LIEUTENANTS, DYING AT HOME,
YEARS AFTER THE WONDERFUL VOYAGE WAS OVER.)

SEND no shaven monks to shrive me, close the doors
against their cries;

Liars all ! ay, rogues and liars, like the Father of all lies ;
Nay, but open wide the casement, once more let me feast
my gaze

On the glittering signs of Heaven, on the mighty Ocean-
ways !

Who's that knocking ? Fra Ramiro ? Left his wine-cup
and arm-chair,

Come again with book and ointment, to anoint me and
prepare ?

Sacramento !—send him packing, with his comrades
shaven-crown'd :

Liars all ! and prince of liars is their Pope ! The world
is round !

See, the Ocean ! like quicksilver, throbbing in the starry
light !

See the stars and constellations, strangely, mystically
bright

Ah, but there, beyond our vision, other stars look brightly
down,

Other stars, and high among them, great Magellan's starry
crown !

O Magellan ! lord and master !—mighty soul no Pope
could tame !

On the seas and on the heavens you have left your radiant
name ;

Brightly shall it burn for ever, o'er the waters without
bound,

Proving Pope and Priests still liars, while the sun-kist
world is round.

Let the cowls at Salamanca cluster thick as rook and daw !

Let the Pope, with right hand palsied, clutch his thunder-bolts of straw !

Heaven and Ocean, here and yonder, put their feeble dreams to shame ;

Earth is round, and high above it shines Magellan's starry name !

Have you vanish'd, O my Master ? O my Captain, King of men,

Shall I never more behold you standing at the mast again,

Eagle-eyed, and stern and silent, never sleeping or at rest,

Pallid as a man of marble, ever looking to the west ?

As I lie and watch the heavens, once again I seem to be Out upon the waste of waters, sailing on from sea to sea. . . .

Hark ! what's that ?—the monks intoning in the chapel
close at hand ?

Nay, I hear but sea-birds screaming, round dark capes of
lonely land.

Out upon the still equator, on a sea without a breath,
Burning, blistering in the sunlight, we are tossing sick to
death ;

Every night the sun sinks crimson on the water's endless
swell,

Every dawn he rises golden, fiery as the flames of Hell.

Seventy days our five brave vessels welter in the watery
glare,

O'er the bulwarks hang the seamen panting open-mouth'd
for air ;

On the "Trinitie" Magellan watches in a fierce unrest,
Never doubting or despairing, ever looking to the
west.

Then at last with fire and thunder open cracks the sultry
sky,

While the surging seas roll under, swift before the blast
we fly,

Westward, ever westward, plunging, while the waters wash
and wail;

Nights and days drift past in darkness while we sail,
and sail, and sail.

Then the Tempest, like an eagle by a thunderbolt struck
dead,

With one last wild flap of pinions, droppeth spent and
bloody-red,

Purpling Heaven and Ocean lieth on the dark horizon's
brink,

While upon the decks we gather silently, and watch him
sink.

Troublously the Ocean labours in a last surcease of pain,
While a soft breath blowing westward wafts us softly on
the main,—

Nearer to the edge of darkness where the flat earth ends,
men swear,
Where the dark abysses open, gulf on gulf of empty air
Creeping silently our vessels enter wastes of wondrous
weed,
Slimy growth that clings around them, tangle growing
purple seed,
Staining all the waste of waters, making isles of floating
black,
While the seamen, pointing fingers, shrink in dread, and
cry, "Turn back!"

On the "Trinitie" Magellan stands and looks with fearless
eyes—
"Fools, the world is round!" he answers, "onward still
our pathway lies;
Though the gulfs of Hell yawn'd yonder, though the Earth
were ended there,
I would venture boldly forward, facing Death and Death's
despair."

On their knees they kneel unto him, cross themselves
and shriek afraid,

Pallid as a man of marble stands the Captain undismayed,
Claps on sail and leads us onward, while the ships crawl
in his track,

Slowly, scarcely moving, trailing monstrous weeds that
hold them back.

On each vessel's prow a seaman stands and casts the
sounding-lead,

In the cage high up the foremast gather watchers sick
with dread.

Calmly on the poop Magellan marks the Heavens and
marks the Sea,

Darkness round and darkness o'er him, closing round the
“Trinitie.”

Days and nights of deeper darkness follow—then there
comes the cry,

“He is mad—Death waits before us—turn the ships and
let us fly !

Storm of mutinous anger gathers round the Captain stern
and true,

Near the foremast, fiercely glaring, flash the faces of the
crew.

One there is, a savage seaman, gnashing teeth and waving
hands,

Strides with curses to the Captain where with folded arms
he stands,—

“Turn, thou madman, turn !” he shrieketh—scarcely hath
he spoke the word,

Ere a bleeding log he falleth, slaughter’d by the Leader’s
sword !

“Fools and cowards !” cries Magellan, spurning him with
armèd heel,

“If another dreams of flying, let him speak—and taste
my steel !”

Like caged tigers when the Tamer enters calmly, shrink
the band,

While the Master strides among them, cloth'd in mail and
sword in hand.

O Magellan ! lord and leader !—only He whose fingers
frame

Twisted thews of pard or panther, knot them round their
hearts of flame,

Light the emeralds burning brightly in their eyeballs as
they roll,

Could have made that mightier marvel, thine inexorable
soul !

Onward, ever on, we falter—till there comes a dawn of
Day

Creeping ghostly up behind us, mirror'd faintly far away,
While across the seas to starboard loometh strangely land
or cloud—

“ Land to starboard ! ” cries Magellan—“ Land ! ” the
seamen call aloud.

Southward steering creep the vessels, while the lights of
morning grow;

Fades the land, while in our faces chilly fog and vapour
blow;

Colder grows the air, and clinging round the masts and
stiffening sails

Freezes into crystal dewdrops, into hanging icicles !

Suddenly arise before us, phantom-wise, as in eclipse,
Icebergs drifting on the Ocean like innumerable ships—
In the light they flash prismatic as among their throng
we creep,

Crashing down to overwhelm us, thundering to the
thund'rous Deep !

Towering ghostly and gigantic, 'midst the steam of their
own breath,

Moving northward in procession in their snowy shrouds
of Death,

Rise the bergs, now overtoppling like great fountains in
the air,

While along their crumbling edges slips the seal and steals
the bear.

With the frost upon his armour, like a skeleton of steel,
Stands the Master, waiting, watching, clad in cold from
head to heel ;

Loud his voice rings through the vapours, ordering all and
leading on,

Till the bergs, before his finger, fall back ghostlike, and
are gone !

Once again before our vision sparkles Ocean wide and
free,

With the sun's red ball of crimson resting on the rim of
sea ;—

“Lo, the sun !” he laughs exulting—“still he beckons
far away—

Earth is round, and on its circle evermore we chase the
Day !”

As he speaks the sunset blackens. Twilight trembles
through the skies

For a moment—then the heavens open all their starry
eyes !

Suddenly strange Constellations flash from out the fields
of blue—

Not a star that we remember, not a splendour priestcraft
knew !

Sinking on his knee, Magellan prays : “ Now glory be to
God !

To the Christ who led us forward on His wondrous
watery road !

See, the heavens give attestation that our search shall
yet be crowned,

Proving Pope and Priests still liars, and the sunkist world
is round ! ”

Sparkling ruby-ray'd and golden round the dusky neck
of Night

Hangs the jewel'd Constellation, strangely, mystically
bright—

Pointing at it cries the Master, "By the God we all adore,
It shall bear *my* name, MAGELLAN!" and it bears it,
evermore.

Storms arising sweep us onward, but each night our
courage grows,

Newer portals of the Heavens seem to open and enclose,
Showing in the blue abyss vistas luminously strange,
Sphere on sphere, and far beyond them fainter lights that
sparkle and change !

Presently once more we falter among pools of drifting
scum,

Weed and tangle—o'er the blackness curious sea-birds go
and come—

While to southward looms a darkness, as of land or
gathering cloud,

Northward too, another darkness, and a sound of breakers
loud.

Once again they call in terror, " Turn again, for Death
is near ! "

Once again he quells their tumult, smiting till they
crouch in fear.

On with darkness closing round them, land or cloud, our
fleet is led,

Fighting tides that sweep them backward, flowing from
some gulf of dread.

Next, the Vision ! next the Morning, after rayless nights
and days,

Twinkling on a great calm Ocean stretching far as eye
can gaze,—

Newer heavens and newer waters, solitary and profound,
Rise before us, while behind us Day arises crimson-
crown'd !

Turning we behold the shadows of the straits through
which we sped,

Then again our eyes look forward where the windless
waters spread ;

Overhead the sun rolls golden, moving westward through
the blue,

Reddens down the far-off heavens, beckons bright, and we
pursue.

On that vast and tranquil Ocean, folding wings the strong
winds dwell,

Sleeping softly or just stirring to the water's tranquil swell,
Peaceful as the fields of heaven where the stars like bright
flocks feed,—

So that many dream they wander thro' the azure Heaven
indeed !

Then Magellan, from its scabbard drawing forth his shining
sword,

Grasps the blade, and downward bending dips the bright
hilt overboard—

“ By the holy Cross's likeness, mirror'd in this hilt ! ” cries
he,

“ Be this Ocean called Pacific, since it sleeps eternallie ! ”

Pastured with a calm eternal, drawing down the clouds
in dew,
Sighing low with soft pulsations, darkly, mystically blue,
Lies that long untrodden Ocean, while for months we sail
it o'er ;
Ever dawns the sun behind us, ever swiftly sets before.

But like devils out of Tophet, as we sail with God for
Guide,
Rise the Spectres, Thirst and Hunger, hollow-cheek'd and
cruel-eyed ;
Fierce and famish'd creep the seamen, while the tongues
between their teeth
Loll like tongues of hounds for water, dry as dust and
black with death.

Many fall and die blaspheming, "Give us food !" the
living call—
Pallid as a man of marble stands the Master gaunt and
tall,

Hunger fierce within him also, and his parch'd lips prest
in pain,

But a mightier thirst and hunger burning in his heart
and brain !

Black decks blistering in the sunlight, sails and cordage
dry as clay,

Crawl the ships on those still waters night by night and
day by day ;

Then the rain comes, and we lap it as upon the decks it
flows—

“Spread a sail !” calls out the Master, and we catch it ere
it goes.

Now and then a lonely sea-bird hovers far away, and we
Crouch with hungry eyes and watch it fluttering closer
o'er the sea,

Curse it if it flies beyond us, shoot it if it cometh nigh,
Share the flesh and blood among us, underneath the
Captain's eye.

Sometimes famish'd unto madness, fierce as wolves that
shriek in strife,

One man springs upon another, stabs him with the murder-
ous knife ;

Then the Master, stalking forward where the murderer
shrinks in dread,

Bids him kneel, and as he kneeleth cleaves him down, and
leaves him dead.

O Magellan ! mighty Eagle, circling sunward lost in light,
Wafting wings of power and striking meaner things that
cross thy flight,

God to such as thee gives never lambkin's love or dove's
desire—

Nay, but eyes that scatter terror from a ruthless heart of
fire !

Give me wine. My pulses falter. . . So ! . . . Confusion
to the cowls !

They who hooted at my Eagle, eyes of bats and heads of
owls !

Throw the casement open wider ! There is something yet
to tell—

How we came at last to waters where the naked islesmen
dwell.

Isles of wonder, fringed with coral, ring'd with shallows
turquoise-blue,

Where bright fish and crimson monsters flash'd their
jewel'd lights and flew,

Steeps of palm that rose to heaven out of purple depths
of sea,

While upon their sunlit summits stirr'd the tufted cocoa-
tree—

Isles of cinnabar and spices, where soft airs for ever creep,
Scenting Ocean all around them with strange odours soft
as sleep—

Isles about whose promontories danced the black man's
light canoe,

Isles where dark-eyed women beckon'd, perfumed like the
breath they drew.

Drunken with the sight we landed, rush'd into the scented
glades,

Treading down the scented branches, seized the struggling
savage maids.

Ah, the orgy ! Still it sickens !—blood of men bestrewed
our path,

Till the islesmen rose against us, thick as vultures shriek-
ing wrath.

Then, the sequel ! Nay, I know not how the damnëd deed
could be—

By some islesman's poisoned arrow or some Spaniard's
treacherie ;

But one evening, as we struggled fighting to our boats on
shore,

In the shallows fell the Captain, foully slain, and rose no
more !

O Magellan ! O my Master ! O my Captain, King of men !
Was it fit thou so shouldst perish, though thy work was
over then,

Fouly slain by foe or comrade, butcher'd like a common
thing,

Thou whose eagle flight had circled Earth upon undaunted
wing !

Nay, but then my King had conquered ! Earth and Ocean
to his sight

Open'd had their wondrous visions, shaming centuries of
night ;

Nay, but even the shining Heavens kept the record of his
fame—

Earth was round, and high above it shone Magellan's starry
name.

How our wondrous voyage ended ? Nay, I know not,—
all was done ;

Lying in my ship I sickened, moaning, hidden from the
sun.

Yea ! the vessels drifted onward till they came to isles of
calm,

Where some savage monarch hail'd them, standing under-
neath a palm.

How the wanderers took these islands tributary to our
King,

Show'd the Cross, baptized the monarch, homeward crept
on weary wing ?

Pshaw, 'tis nothing ! All was over ! *He* had staked his
soul and gained,

They but reaped the Master's sowing, they but crawl'd
where he had reigned !

Hark ! what sound is that ? The chiming of the dreary
vesper bell ?

Nay, I hear but Ocean sighing, feel the waters heave and
swell.

Earth is round, but sailing sunward with my Master still
I fare—

Other Heavens his ship is searching,—and I go to seek
him *there* !

The wall of darkness round the rainy house
Broke as I ended, and a watery beam
Of sunshine struck the pane, and lingering on it,
Became prismatic. Then with quiet smile
Professor Mors, the truculent Irishman,
Whose treatise on the origin of worlds
Fluttered the Churches for a season, said :
“ Man conquers earth, and climbing yonder Heaven
Pursues the baleful gods from throne to throne !
Ah, but the strife was long, and even *here*
It hath not ended yet. Each Phantom laid,
Another rises, though on fearless wing
We creep from world to world. Evil abides,
And with her hideous mother, Ignorance,
Scatters pollution ! ”

Calmly answered him
Dan Paumanok, the Yankee pantheist :
“ Friend, I have dwelt on earth as long as you,
And found all evil here but forms of good ! ”

Whereat some laughed, and cried, "A paradox!"
But, gravely leaning back in his arm-chair,
The greybeard cried, "Knowledge and Ignorance,
I calculate, are sisters—otherwise
Named Good and Evil. Hand in hand they walk,
So like, that even those who know them best
Scarcely distinguish their identities!
Thro' the dark places of the troubled earth
The first walks radiant and the last gropes blind;
But when they come upon the mountain-tops,
In the night's stillness, underneath the stars,
The last it is that oftentimes leads the first
And points her upward to the heavenly way!"

"If this be so," the grim Professor cried,
Shrugging his shoulders with impatient sneer,
"Then wrong is every whit as good as right,
The Darkness is no better than the Light
It comprehends not!" "Certainly," exclaimed
The melancholy transcendentalist;

“One is the tally of the other, friend ;
Nay more, they intermingle, and are one !
The morning dew, that scarcely bends the flowers,
Exhaled to heaven becomes the thunderbolt
That strikes and slays at noon.”

But Mors replied

With cold superior smile : “A cheerful creed !
And comfortable,—since, whate'er befalls,
No matter if the foemen sack the city,
No matter if the plague-cart comes and goes,
No matter if the starving cry for bread,
The sleepy watchman calmly cries ‘All’s well !’
For my poor part, as one whose youth was spent,
Not in pursuit of vain delusive dreams,
But in the halls of Science, whom I serve,
I fail to find in Evil any form
My mistress would be brought to christen good ;
Nay, on my life,” he added, gathering zeal,
“Than such a pantheistic lotus-flower
I’d rather choose those husks and shells of grace

John Calvin found when, prone on hands and knees,
He searched the garbage of Original Sin !
And rather than believe that Hell was Heaven,
People my Hell once more with soot-black fiends !
For Fever, Pestilence, and Ignorance
No angels are, fall'n from some high estate,
But devilish shapes indeed, beneath the heel
Of Hermes, god of healing and of light,
Soon to be trampled down and vanquishëd.
And other hideous things that waste the world,
War, Superstition, Anarchy, Disease,
Monsters that Man has fashion'd, like to that
Framed in the poet's tale by Frankenstein—
These shall be slain by their creator's hand,
Their Master's, even Man's. Survey the earth ;
And see the sunrise of our saner creed
Scattering the darkness and the poisonous fumes
Which eighteen hundred weary years ago
Came from the sunless sepulchre of Christ.
Where Fever poisoned the pellucid well

The drinking-fountain clear as crystal flows ;
Where the marsh thicken'd and miasma spread,
Cities arise, with clean and shining streets
And sewers transmuting garbage into gold ;
Where the foul blood-stained Altar once was set,
Stand the Museum and Laboratory ;
The Library, the Gymnasium, and the Bath
Replace the palace ; Manufactories,
Gathering together precious gifts for man,
Supplant the Monolith and Pyramid.
Thus everywhere the light of human love
Brightens a wondering convalescent world
Just rising from the spectre-haunted bed
Whereon it sickened of a long disease,
Attended by the false physician, Christ."

He paused ; the fever of his eager words
Flash'd on from face to face until it reached
The face of Verity, the priest of Art ;
But there it faded, for with pallid frown

And lifted hands, the gentle prophet cried :
“Light? Sunrise? Sunlight? I who speak have eyes,
And yet I see but darkness visible !
Lost is the azure in whose virgin depths
The filmy cirrus turn’d to Shapes divine,
Goddess and god, soft-vestured, white as wool !
Faded the sun, which, striking things of stone,
Turn’d them to statues which like Memmon’s sang,
And palpitating over domes and walls,
Cover’d them o’er with forms miraculous,
Prismatic, which the hand of genius touch’d
And fixed in colour ere the forms could fade !
The world, you say, is heal’d ; to me, it seems
Just smitten with the plague, and everywhere
The foul cloud gathers, ‘shutting out the sun.
And that faint sound we deem the sweet church chimes,
Is but the death-bell tinkling, while the cart
Comes for its load of dark disfigured dead.
Meantime, within the foul dissecting-room
The form of Man, which, ere our plague-time came,

Was reverenced in shapes of loveliness,
Rosy in flesh, or snowy white in stone,
Lies desecrated, hideous, horrible,
Pois'ning the air and sickening the soul !
And on the slab, beneath the torturer's knife,
Man's gentle friend, the hound, shrieks piteously,
Answer'd by all the bleeding flocks of Pan !
And everywhere the fume of Anarchy,
And hideous monsters of machinery
Toiling for ever in their own thick breath,
Blends with the plague-smoke, blotting out the sun,
Whereby alone all shapes of beauty live !”

“ Nay, nay,” cried Barbara, “ though it rains to-day
The lift will clear to-morrow. I believe
You all are partly right and partly wrong,
For surely many things in life that seem
Most evil are but blessings in disguise ?
And difficult 'tis, maybe, to discern
Where Knowledge ends and Ignorance begins.

But then, again, what soul rejoices not
To see yon mailed Perseus, Science, stand
Bruising the loathsome hydra of Disease,
Ay, often slaying Sin and conquering Death ?
And yet, again, the counter-plea is true,
That Science, though she heals the wounds of life,
Whiles heals them cruelly and uncannily,—
Just shuts the sufferer in a sunless room,
And changes the old merry tunes of time
To daft mechanic discord,—such as that
Which issues from the throats of mine and mill,
With sough of poisonous reek and flames more sad
Than ever came from Tophet !”

As she ceased,

Professor Mors, the pallid pessimist,
Outstretched his lean and skeletonian hand,
Pointing out sunward :—“ See ! ” he cried, “ the God,
Last-born and first-born, Nature’s microcosm,
Who, sitting on his mighty throne of graves,
Murmurs the death-dirge of Humanity !

THE THIRD DAY.

Had ye but ears, methinks that you might catch
The burthen of his melancholy song,
As I myself have heard it oftentimes
When wandering weary underneath the stars.
"Twas thus, methinks, it ran, or something thus,
Full of a burthen strange and sad as ever
Was heard beside the wave-wash'd shores of Time."

Soliloquy of the Grand Etre.

I AM God, who was Man. Lord of earth, sea, and sky,
I endure while men die ;
The River of Life laps my feet, flowing by.

Out of darkness it came, into darkness it goes,
From repose to repose,
And mirrors my face in its flood as it flows.

I am Man, who was men. I am flesh, sense, and soul,
I was part who am Whole,
I am God, being Man, whom no god may control.

Now, sitting alone on my throne, I survey
The dim Past far away,
Whence I came, on the borders of infinite day.

All things and all forces combining have brought
Me, their God, out of nought,
Through the night-time of sense to the morning of
thought.

I think and I am. I look round me, and lo !

I remember and know
Both whence I have issued and whither I go.

I stand on the heights of the earth, and descry,
From sky on to sky,
The path through the ages that led me so high.

From the deserts of space where my fire-webs were spun,
Spreading thence one by one
Till they flash'd into flame and cohered to a sun ;

From the great whirling sun whence, with no eye to
mark,
I shot like a spark,
Then spun fiery-wing'd, round and round, through the dark.

There slowly, alone in the silence of space,
I moved in my place,
With the night at my back and the light on my face.

First shapeless and formless, then spheric and fair,
With no sense, with no care,
I cool'd my hot breast in dark fountains of air.

And the mist of my breathing enwrapt me, and grew
Like a cloud in the blue—
Then flooded my frame with warm oceans of dew.

In the waters I swam, while the sun, red as blood,
Of the waves of that flood
Wove a green grassy sheen, for my raiment and food.

At last, one bright morn, with no sense, with no sight,
After æons of night,
I lay like a bride new-apparell'd and bright.

THE THIRD DAY.

And embracing my Bridegroom, who bent from the skies
With bright beautiful eyes,
Felt something within me grow quick, and arise.

And straightway I too was the seed, and behold !
Small and lustrous and cold,
I moved in the slime, taking shapes manifold.

I was quick who was clay. I was living and drew
Breath of darkness and dew ;
From form on to form groping blindly, I grew.

Then form'd like a Monster with wings, I upleapt
From the waters and swept
Through the mirk of their breath ; or lay snakewise, and
crept.

Change on change, till I wander'd on hands and on feet
Where the cloud-waves retreat ;
And ever each age I grew fair and more fleet.

The world that was I brighten'd round me, and still,
Some strange task to fulfil,
I changed and I changed, with no wish, with no will.

At last, after æons of death and decay,
At the gateways of Day
I stood, looking up at the heavens far away !

The sea at my feet, and the stars o'er my head,
Naked, dark, with proud tread
I walked on the heights, being quick, who was dead.

I was Man, who was monster. I lived, and I drew
Gentle breath from the blue,
Looked backward and forward, moved blindly, but knew.

And I heark'd to the sounds of the earth, to the herds
Of the beasts and the birds,
And I broke to wild babble of mystical words.

I could speak, who was dumb ; I could smile, who was
stone ;

Of those others not one
Could speak or could smile. I was kinglike and lone.

I reign'd o'er the earth, and I slew for a feast
Both the bird and the beast ;

My seed, scatter'd eastward and westward, increased.

But I feared what the bird and the beast did not fear :
Shapes of dread creeping near
In the night-time, strange voices that cried in mine ear.

And I saw what the bird and the beast could not see—
Shapes that thunder'd at me
From the clouds overhead, till I prayed on my knee.

And I named the dark gods that the beasts could not
name—
And I crouch'd, fearing blame
At the voice of the waters, the thunder's acclaim.

One god seemed the strangest and saddest of all,
Who with silent footfall
Slew my seed in the night, smote the great and the small

Men were scattered like leaves—I remained being Man ;
'Neath the blight and the ban,
Like a hound on the grave of its master I ran

On the tombs of my race, crying loud in despair
To the gods of the air,
Who changed as the clouds and were deaf to my prayer.

Then I learned the one Name that the gods overhead
Ever whisper'd in dread,
And methought He was Lord of the quick and the dead.

For I looked on the Book of the stars, and could frame
The strange signs of the Name,
And yet when I called Him He heard not, nor came.

And as wave follows wave, or as cloud follows cloud,
Flash'd my kind in their crowd,
Then slept in their season, each man in his shroud.

Men died, but I died not ; I lived and discerned,
With my face ever turned
To the skies, where the lights of my universe burned.

Then I groped on the earth, and I searched sea and land
For the signs of the Hand
Which shaped the cloud-limits, the stars, and the sand.

And all that I found was the footprints of clay
I had left on my way
From the darkness of night to the borders of day.

Then I search'd the great voids of the heaven for a trace
Of a Form or a Face ;
I questioned the stars—each was dumb in its place.

So I cried "Wheresoever I gaze, I descry,
On the earth, in the sky,
One thing that is deathless, the Life that is I!"

And I cried, as I looked on the image I cast
On the limitless Vast,
"I was from the first, and I am till the last!"

I am Lord of the world. I am God, being Man.
In the night I began,
Then grew from a cell to a soul, without plan.

As far as the limits of Time and of Space
I my footprints can trace
Wending onward and upward, from race back to race.

I behold, who was blind. I was part, who am Whole.
As the waters that roll
Are my seed who forsake and upbuild me, their Soul.
o

Do they weep? I am calm. Do they doubt? I am sure.
Though they die, I endure,
As a fire that ascending grows stainless and pure.

I discern all the Past, waves on waves that have fled,
While I press with slow tread
To a goal I discern not, o'er snowdrifts of dead.

I am Thought in the flesh, who was Sense in the seed.
Silent, sanctified, freed,
I emerge, the full sign of the Dream and the Deed.

I am God, being Man. In my glory I blend
Life and death without end.
If the Void hold my peer, let Him speak. I attend.

"So speaks the last and mightiest of the gods,
Our Master, Man immortal!" Sparkle cried;
"His shadow fills the universe as far
As His own thought can wing; His bright eyes face
The sunlight with a blaze it cannot blind;
And in the hollow of His hand He weighs
The stars that are His playthings. He has slain
All other gods, the greatest and the least,
And now within the inmost heart of earth
He builds a Temple more miraculous
Than any little temple wrought in stone!"

"Say rather," answered Bishop Eglantine,
"He wearily prepares the funeral pyre
Whereon Himself, in the dim coming years,
Shall mount and royally burn, or (failing fire)
Whereon outstretch'd He shall await the end,
While quietly the skeleton hands of Frost

THE THIRD DAY.

Weave Him a shroud, and Time doth snow upon Him
Out of the heavens of eternal cold !

For is not one thing sure, that this round world
Must perish in its season, or become
A habitation where no breathing thing
Can longer creep or crawl ? Alas for Him,
Your poor Grand *Etre*, enrooted like a tree
In the still changing soil of human life,
When human life itself shall pass away
As breath upon a mirror, and Night resume
Her empire on the rayless universe.

Wiser, methinks, than your pale seer of France,
Who fashion'd this same shadow of a god,
Is he who prophesies in soul's despair
The sure extinction of the conscious types.
Place for the pessimist !—in Hartmann comes
A later Buddha, and a balefuller.
'Ere yet Man's Soul,' he crieth, 'merges back
Into the nothingness from which it rose,
Three stages of illusion must be past :

The stage of a belief in happiness
In this hard world ; the stage of a belief
In happiness in any world to come ;
And last, the stage of yet more foolish faith
In any happiness the race can gain
Beyond the life of individual man.
Your god, then, is foredoom'd to nothingness,
Surely as Zeus or any of the slain
Already peopling chaos ! ”

“ Yet—he reigns ! ”

Cried Sparkle, “ and we do him reverence !
Fairer than Balder, tenderer than Christ,
His brethren, mightier than Jove or Brahn,
He adumbrates the wisdom and the joy
Of Nature, and his large beneficence
Extends sweet aid to all created things.
All that he prophesies and promises
He realises and fulfils, unlike
The thunderer on Sinai, or the God
Who wore the crown of thorns ! ”

"Alas, poor God!"

Murmur'd that other. "Fashion'd out of pain,
Shapen in doubt, and clothen with despair,
How shall He, having re-created Earth
And brought the fabled Eden back again,
Shut out the memory of His own sad dead ?
For looking backward, He beholds the world
Strewn with the graves of those who have lived and loved,
And suffered, to complete His deity ;
And looking sadly round Him, He beholds
Millions in act to suffer, hears the wail
That shall not cease for many an age to come ;
And looking forward, He sees the cataclysm
Of Nature, and his own completed work
Abolish'd in the twinkling of a star !
O pale phantasmic mockery of a god !
O shadow fainter than all shadows cast
Since first the wild man fear'd the darkness, shrieked
At his own shape projected on the cloud—
A spectre of the Brocken, a forlorn

Image of primal ignorance and fear !
Shall we resign for such a dream as this
Our human birthright and our heavenly hope ? ”

“ Nay,” interposed another—Edward Clay,
Pupil of Verity and Ercildoune,
“ The exodus from Paris following
The exodus from Houndsditch, what remain
But *human* types of godhead, fit at least
For temporary worship ? I will travel
As far as Mecca on my hands and knees
To see a godlike *man*,—in whom alone
We find the apex and the crown of things,
The vindication of Humanity.
The individual gives the type divine,
The rest, the race, is nothing ! ”

Thereupon

Outspoke Dan Paumanok, the pantheist :
“ Friend, I have often known your godlike men,
And loved them, not for that wherein they missed,

But that wherein they shared, the common strength
And weakness of the race. I love to look
On Goethe's feet of clay, to touch the dross
Mixed with the golden heart of Washington,
To think that Socrates, who braved the gods
And drank his hemlock cup so cheerfully,
Shrank from the chiding of a shrew at home.
Gods? Godlike men? I guess all men possess,
By right of manhood, godlike qualities;
But high as ever human type has reached,
The wave of masterful Humanity
Sweeps higher, striking yonder shore of stars!
Worship no man at all, but every man,
Man typical, Man cosmic, multiform,
The flower and fruit of Being; seize the Thought
Effused from human forms as light is shed
Out of the motion of a living thing;
Follow the sunward flight of our fair race,
Which breathes and suffers, multiplies and dies,
And in a million forms of sense and soul

Sweeps into action and is justified !
The blacksmith at his anvil, the glad child
Gathering shells upon the ocean shore,
The scientist in his laboratory,
The prostitute that walks the moonlit streets,
The sailor at the masthead, or the poet
Lying and dreaming in the summer wood—
All these, and countless other forms divine,
Are evermore divine enough for me.

Fast through them flows the strange and mystic Thought
We comprehend not being things that die,
But which, if we but knew, is Life itself—
Large Life and ample godhead. We are forms
The god-force fashions, as it fashions suns
And clouds and waves and patient animals,
Dead things and living, quickening through the stars
As through the kindling ovum in the womb,—
And every form of life, howe'er so faint,
Is corporate godhead ! ”

“ Ho ! a heretic ! ”

Cried Douglas, laughing ; “ come, my myrmidons,
Make ready there the faggots and the stake :
By Cock and by St. Peter, Dan must burn !
For less than this Giordano Bruno wore
The martyr’s shirt of fire, for less than this
John Calvin tuck’d the bed of flaming coals
Around Servetus, chuckling to himself
‘ He called me names, *improbus et blasphemus*,
And routing me in argument, affirm’d
Stone bench and table, things inanimate,
To be celestial Substance, very God :
Wherefore I hand him to be burned alive
By such celestial Substance—wood, coals, fire—
And to this God I leave him cheerfully !’
For John had humour, mark you, grim as death
And blue as brimstone ; for the rest, he knew
The God of Judah kept His ancient tastes
And dearly loved a human sacrifice ! ”

“ Those days are done for ever,” Primrose said,

“ And he who slew Servetus in his wrath
Slew also priestcraft and the crimson Beast,
So that the lamb of gentleness might reign.”

“Indeed !” cried Sparkle with a smile and sneer.
“ One comfort is, grim John invented Hell,
Fit home for such a ravening wolf as he !
Why, yes, we grant you Hell, if you admit
Your Calvin’s place there ! But I doubt indeed
If you have yet abolished martyrdom.
I know full many Christians, worthy souls,
Who swear by book and preach to simple men,
Who, did our gentler human laws permit,
Would strip our Cuthberts naked to the skin
And give them fire for raiment willingly !
Ay, and they do it, freely dealing out
Moral damnation and keen social flame,
So that no man alive, if he would keep
His worldly goods and social privileges,
Dare speak the thing he thinks, or openly

Affirm the heavens are empty, God dethroned.
The thinker is an outcast as of old,
And scarcely dares to phrase his thought aloud
Even on the pillow where he rests his head,
Lest his goodwife should hear the heresy,
And call the curate or the parish priest
To compass his conversion, or at least
Rescue the little ones from blight and bane."

"Why not?" most sadly answer'd Eglantine;
"Blame not the shepherd if he seeks to save
His lambkins from the touch of Antichrist.
Our gentle Inquisition, though it works
In cruelty no more, but all in love,
Is slack, too slack. The age is godless, sir.
Affrighted by the spectres all around,
Our priests lack zeal! Meantime how busily
The self-approven priests of Science toil—
The Devil still is busier gathering tares
Than angels who upbind the golden grain."

Another voice broke in, a woman's voice,
Clear-toned and gentle—round Miss Hazlemere's,
The grey-hair'd lassie with a matron's form
And mother's yearning in her virgin eyes :
Half doubter, half believer, she asserts
The privilege of woman's sex to solve
Problems to which the arid minds of men
Are too untender and rectangular,
Rebukes the Churches, rates the scientists,
And lights a lonely spiritual lamp
By stormy waters, on the rocks of Doubt.
"The truth's with Father Eglantine," she said ;
"A priestcraft is a priestcraft, though it speaks
The first word of Religion or the last
Of Science. I would trust Geneva John
No more than Torquemada, and no less
Than Cuthbert or than Mors, if e'er the law
Arm'd them with amplitude of priestly power.
Think you there is no Inquisition now ?
Alas ! I too know scores of simple souls

Who, having kept their foolish faith in God,
Anthropomorphic, ancient, infantine,
Are, brought before the judges of the time,
Condemn'd as mad or hypocritical !

The old belief is so unfashionable
Among the very wise and over-wise,
That he who dares affirm it openly
Is deem'd unfit to govern his own wife
Or be the lord of his own nursery.

And presently, be sure, if this thing grows,
'Twill be as perilous to believe in God
As 'twas in darker ages to discuss
God's Substance, or attempt to separate
The *Tria Juncta* of the Trinity.

No priestcraft and no priest at all, say I,
But freedom and free thought, free scope, free choice
To fashion any fetish that I please !"

So speaking, she was conscious of two eyes,
Youthful and eloquent, regarding her :

Mr. Marsh Mallow, bright and bold, but growing
Like his own namesake in a watery place,
Caught up the ball she smiling threw his way,
And cried : "Truth still remains with Eglantine !
The Church which builds itself on Peter's Rock,
And still doth keep the keys of Heaven and Hell,
Lacks zeal to face those Spectres of the mind
Which it might lay to sleep for evermore
With just one wave of the enchanter's wand.
Meantime they rush abroad like ravening wolves,
Appalling Reason, making Love afraid,
Rending in twain the beauteous heaven-eyed Lamb
Which men have christen'd Faith. But patience yet ;
The priestcraft and the priest shall conquer yet,
And men grow holy in their own despite !"

Flush'd to the temples, Stephen Harkaway,
The dandy of revolt, a positivist,
And positive to the very finger-tips,
Made answer : " Yet again the solemn truth

THE THIRD DAY.

Remains with Eglantine ! The priest *shall* reign,
And on the sands of time another Pope
Upbuild another and a fairer Rome.

There the apostles of the fair new creed,
Having abolished Christ and all the gods,
Destroyed the current poison of belief
In individual immortality,
Shall to the only god, Humanity,
Sing their hosannah ! Ay, and they shall raise
Their Inquisition on the heart of man,
And unto Vice and Ignorance and Disease,
All things that mar their god's divinity,
Deal the *peine forte et dure* ! Prison and fire
Shall fright the fortune-telling charlatans
Who creep with old wives' tales from house to house !
Since Man without a creed is stark and starved,
And only feeble souls desiderate
A creed without a priesthood, ours shall be
Tyrannical, I trust, and, furthermore,
Kind to the very verge of cruelty !

No fetish, Madam, will be tolerated,
Nor any juggler's tricks to cheat the soul."

"I thank you, sir," Miss Hazlemere replied,
"For throwing off the mask that we may see
The features of your God. I ever thought
Your Comte a Jesuit in disguise ! But come,
Our Queen looks sadly on this war of words,
And longs to hush its Babel. Who will touch
The midriff of the mystery with a song ?
For Music, of all angels walking earth,
Is fittest far to phrase the Thought divine
Which dies away in utterance on the lips
That only speak poor human nature's prose.
Sweet Music gropes her way and walketh blind
Because she saw the Vision long ago
And closed her eyes in joy unutterable,
The light of which lies ever upon her face
Although she cannot see !"

Then at a sign
From Lady Barbara, I, her poet, rose
And touch'd the instrument, with eager hand
Sounded a prelude of precipitous notes,
Then broke to measured song ; and thus I sang :—

O MARINERS.

O Mariners, out of the sunlight, and on through the infinite
Main,
We have sailed, departing at morning ;—and now it is morning
again.
Dimly, darkly, and blindly, our life and our journey begun,
Blind and deaf was our sense with the fiery sands of the sun.
Then slowly, grown stronger and stronger, feeling from zone
on to zone,
We passed the islands of darkness, and reached the sad Ocean,
alone.
But now we pause for a moment, searching the east and the
west,
Above and beneath us the waters that mirror our eyes in their
breast !
Behind, the dawn and the darkness,—new dawn around and
before,—
Ah me, we are weary, and hunger to rest, and to wonder no more.

Yet never, O Mariners, never were we so stately and fair—
The forms of the flood obey us, we are lords of the birds of the
air.

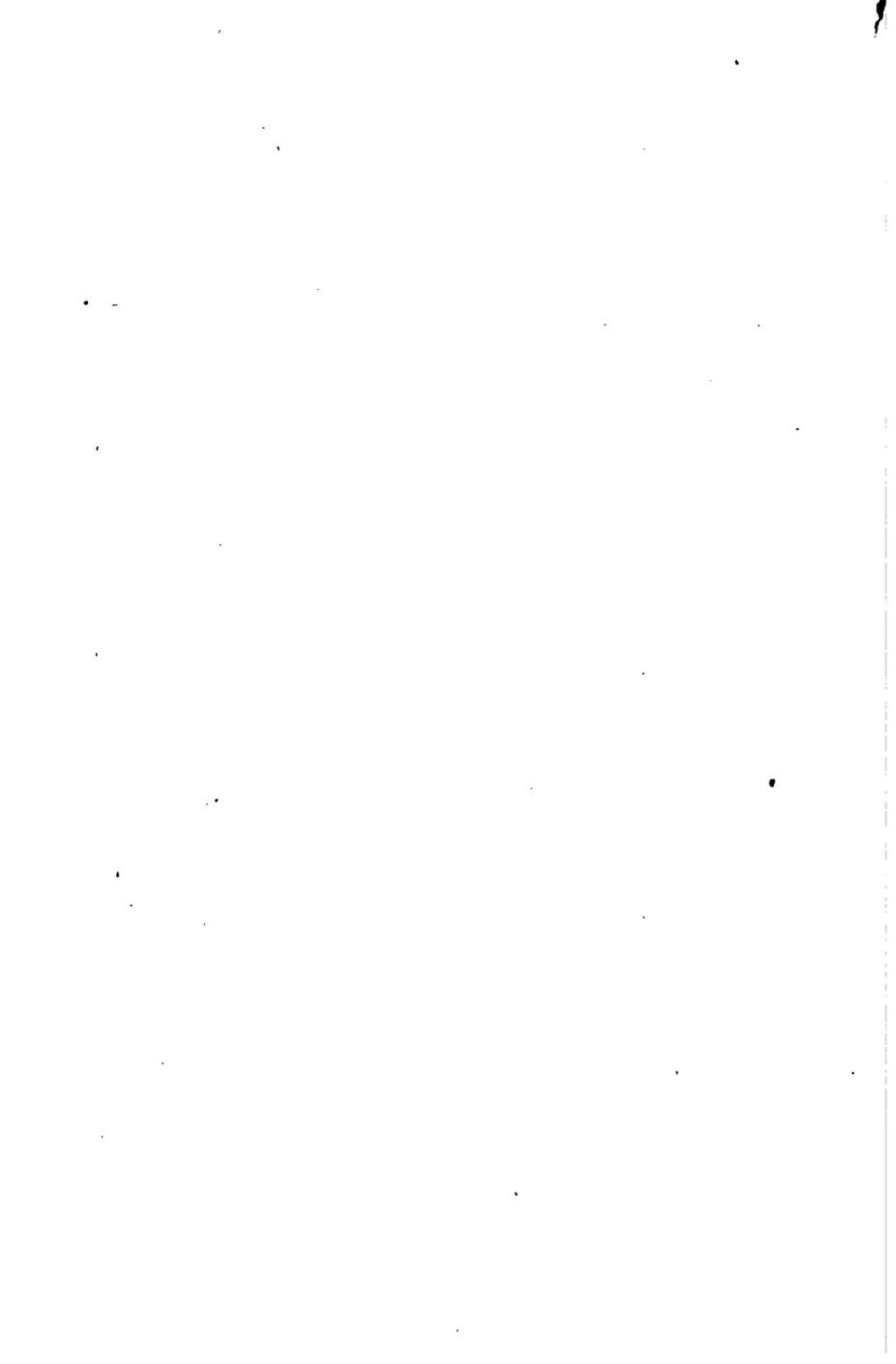
And yet as we sail we are weeping, and crying, “Although
we have ranged
So far over infinite waters, transformed out of darkness and
changed,

We know that the Deep beneath us must drink us and wash us
away”—
Nay, courage—sail on for a season—on, on to the gateways of
Day.

Our voyage is only beginning—its dreariest dangers are done,
We now have a compass to guide us, the Soul, and it points to
the Sun !

The stars in their places obey us, the winds are as slaves to our
sail—
Be sure that we never had journey'd so far but to perish and
fail !

Out of the wonderful sunlight, and on through the infinite Main,
We have sail'd, departing at morning—and now it is morning
again !



Interlude.

To H——.

DEAREST, thou whose lightest breath
Sweetens Life and conquers Death,
Fair as pure, and purer far
Than the dreams of poets are,
Unto thee, and only thee,
I upon my bended knee
Give my birthright—Poesy !

Ishmael of the singing race,
Born where sky and mountain meet,
Standing in a lonely place
With the world below my feet,
Wrapt about with mist and cloud,
Songs of joy I sang aloud !
Then the Muses of the North,
Like Valkyries heavenly-eyed,
From the storm-cloud trooping forth,
Found me on the mountain-side,
Buckled on my mail of steel,
Arm'd me nobly head to heel,
Placed a sword within my hand,
Made me warrior of the Right,
Crying, "Go and take thy stand
In the vanward of the fight !
Hasten forth, made strong and free,
Through thy birthright—Poesy !"

INTERLUDE.

Then I gazed, and far below
Saw the fires of battle glow,
Saw the banners of the world
Kindle, to the winds unfurl'd,—
Saw the pomp of priests and kings
Girt about by underlings,
Hunting down with sword and spear
Liberty, the fleet red-deer,—
Saw the Cities vast and loud,
Foul as Sodom and as proud,
Each a Monster in its mire
Crouching low with eyes of fire ;
Heard the cruel trumpets' blare,
Mix'd with plagal-hymns of prayer,
Saw the world from sea to sea
Blind to Death and Deity !

Singing loud with savage joy
Down the glens I sprang, a boy—
Downward as the torrent swept,
On from rock to rock I leapt,
Reach'd the valleys where the fight
Flash'd in flame from morn to night,
Plunged into the thickest strife,
Scarcely knowing friend from foe,
Knew the bloody stress of life,
Till a sword-thrust laid me low.

Slowly on the moonlit plain,
Where the dead lay dark and dumb,
I, unclosing mine eyes again,
Saw my fair Valkyries come.
Bending over me they crooned
Loving runes and heal'd my wound,—

Then they cried, "Uprise once more,
Seek the City's iamost core,
Find the wretched and opprest,
 Sing them mountain-songs of cheer ;
Help the basest, brand the best,
 We shall watch and hover near—
Face the King upon his throne,
 Face the Priest within the shrine,
Fear no voice save God's alone
(Thou hast heard it oft intone
 Through the cloud-wrapt woods of pine)—
Take thy place, but close to thee
Clasp thy birthright—Poesy !"

Through the City's gates I crept
Silent, while the watchmen slept—
Pass'd from shade to shade wherein
Crowded monstrous shapes of sin,
Peer'd against the panes to see
Lamplit rooms of revelry,
Where the warrior's head did rest
On the harlot's wine-stain'd breast ;
Linger'd on the bridges great,
Melancholy, desolate ;
Watch'd the river roll beneath,
Shimmering in the moonbeam's breath ;
Met the fluttering forms that pass
Painted underneath the gas,
Mark'd the murderer's fearful face
Looming in a lonely place,
Knew the things that wake, and those
Lost in rapture of repose ;
Saw the gradual Dawn flash red
On the housetops overhead,

INTERLUDE.

Till the morning glory broke,
And the sleeping Monster woke !

Singing loud in savage joy,
In the streets I stood, a boy !
Round me flocked the citizens,
Thronging from their homes and dens,
While I spake of signs and dreams
Learn'd among the hills and streams,
Of the God with veillèd head
Passing by with thunder-tread
On the mountains red with morn
In whose bosom I was born.
In a tongue uncouth I sang,
While the air with laughter rang,
Loudest, merriest, when I told
 Of strange visions in the night—
God and angels manifold
 Shining on the mountain-height ;
Then a voice cried, “Come away,
 He is mad, this mountaineer !”—
Lonely in the morning gray
 Soon I sang, with none to hear,
Save a few sad outcast men,
 And a weeping Magdalen.
Then with loud prophetic song
 To the public marts I came,
Strode amidst the busy throng,
 Curst the avarice and the shame,
Call'd the wrath of God upon
 Cæsar sitting on his throne,
By the lights of Heaven and Hell
 Shamed the tinsel'd priests of Bel.
Then around me ere I knew
 Clamour of the factions grew,

Thronging, shrieking, multiplying,
Came the legions of the lying,
Cast me down and stript me bare ;
Yet I struggled in despair,
Till a poison'd dagger's thrust
Laid me dying in the dust.

Then the night came, and the skies
With innumerable eyes
Saw me lying there alone,
Bleeding on the streets of stone ;
While my voice before I died
On my wild Valkyries cried. —
Closing eyelids with a sigh,
 Into night I seem'd to pass,
Seem'd to fade away and fly
 As the breath upon a glass.

Presently I woke again,
Thinking "All is o'er and done,
This is chilly Death's domain,
 Far away from moon and sun !"
Even then methought I heard
 Something moving, breathing near ;
Struggling with the sense I stirred,
 Open'd eyes in fluttering fear,
And before my dazzled sight
Shone a Vision heavenly bright !
Ah, the Vision ! ah, the blest
Rapture, smiling manifest !
O'er me bending stood and smiled
Love in likeness of a Child,—
Holding in her gentle hand
Lilies of the Heavenly Land !

INTERLUDE.

Azure eyes and golden hair,
Gazing on me unafraid,
Sweetly, marvellously fair,
Stood the little Angel-Maid !

Shall I tell how that same hour
Little hands my wound did dress,
How I woke to life and power
Through that Maiden's tenderness ?
Shall I tell (ah, wherefore tell
Unto her who knows so well ?)
Of the strength that came to me,
Not from my Valkyries wild,
Who in need abandon'd me,
But from that celestial Child ?
Though my sword was broken, though
Helm and mail were lying low,
Though my savage strength was shed,
I was quick who late was dead,
All my mountain blood again
Rush'd electric to my brain,
All grew fair where'er I trod
With that messenger of God.

Need I tell (ah, wherefore tell
Unto her who wrought the spell ?)
How I seem'd from that strange hour
Arm'd in nakedness of power ?—
Yet the dagger's thrust again,
Poison'd, treacherous, as before,
Sought me out and would have slain,
While we passed from door to door,
Curst, rejected, and denied,
Ishmael, I, and thou, my Guide !

Child of Light, thy loving look
Brighten'd at each step we took,
Kindled into love more strong
At each cruel slight and wrong,
While thy presence heavenly bright
Grew from child's to woman's height,
And within thy pensive eyes
Rose the lore that makes us wise,—
Woman's love, without whose gleam
Life is like a drunkard's dream !

Need I tell (ah, wherefore tell,
When thy soul remembers well ?)
How smooth Jacob and his race,
Hounding me from place to place,
Hating truth and cursing me,
Stole my birthright—Poesy ?
How the sources of my song,
Darken'd o'er and frozen numb,
Cold and silent lay for long
Like a fountain seal'd and dumb,
Till thy finger touch'd at last
Springs the world deem'd frozen fast ?
High in sunlight, sparkling o'er,
Leaps my fount of song once more,
While thy blessing back to me
Brings my birthright—Poesy !

Child of Light, whose softest breath
Sweetens Life and conquers Death,
Fair as pure, and purer far
Than the dreams of poets are,
Never tongue of man can tell
All thy gifts to Ishmaël !—

INTERLUDE.

Side by side and hand in hand,—
Facing yonder mountain-land
Whence I came and whereupon
God the Lord has set His throne,—
Through the shadowy vales below
Climbing sunward, let us go.
If I sing, I sing through thee !
Wherefore, Sweet, still share with me
What I bring on bended knee—
This my birthright,—Poesy !—

NEW YORK: *Yuletide*, 1884.

[October, 1885.]



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